

Still Praying Strong

**An empirical study of the
praying practices in a secular society**

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Still Praying Strong

An empirical study of the praying practices in a secular society

Een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de Sociale Wetenschappen

Proefschrift

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“Wahre Liebe hebt das Herz über das eigene Ich“

Arnold Janssen (founder SVD)

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

*The Lord's Prayer*¹

dad@hvn
urspshl
we want wot u want
&urth2b like hvn
giv us food
&4giv r sins
lyk we 4giv uvaz
don't test us!
save us!
bcos we kno ur boss
ur tuf
&ur cool 4 eva!
ok?

Is praying getting out-of-date? On the contrary, there are even indications that praying is popular among modern youth. For instance the above version of the Lord's Prayer, restyled in SMS shorthand and translated by and for people not much older than their late twenties. There is also an upcoming market in religious fashion items. T-shirts with sayings like: 'Jesus is my homeboy' and 'Bidden helpt!' (Praying helps!) are worn by hundreds of young people at the EO-jongerendag

1

<u>sms</u>	<u>english</u>	<u>original</u>
dad@hvn	dad at heaven	our Father who art in heaven
urspshl	you're special	hallowed be thy name
we want wot u want	we want what you want	thy kingdom come, thy will be done
&urth2b like hvn	and earth to be like heaven	on earth, as it is in heaven
giv us food	give us food	give us this day our daily bread
&4giv r sins	and forgive our sins	and forgive us our trespasses
lyk we 4giv uvaz	like we forgive others	as we forgive those who trespass against us
don't test us!	don't test us!	and lead us not into temptation
save us!	save us!	but deliver us from evil
bcos we kno ur boss	because we know you're boss	for thine is the kingdom
ur tuf	you're tough	and the power
&ur cool 4 eva!	and you're cool forever!	and the glory, for ever and ever
ok?	OK?	Amen

(EO-youth day). Another example that praying is upcoming and gaining new terrain is the glossy booklet '*Prayers*' by Oliviero Toscani (1999), the man behind the notorious advertisements of the clothing company Benetton. The booklet contains modern prayers of young people from all over the world, and with its intriguing modern religious pictures, this book sells a new message: 'religion is cool, praying is hot'.

It could be argued that these expressions are only a temporary hype of young people, just as they download religious ringtones and wear 'WWJD?' bracelets (What would Jesus Do?). The modernisation of prayer, however, is not only found among youth. In this respect, the established religious institutions also keep up with the times. Churches provide prayers on internet, sometimes with a daily update, and several TV stations broadcast massive gatherings with prayer sessions, including a direct telephone number for a live prayer request. The Dalai Lama suggested to download the '*Om mani padme hum*' prayer to the computer's hard drive, where it will spin at a rate of some fifty-four hundred rotations per minute, calling forth the blessing of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, as effectively as the traditional Tibetan prayer wheels.

On a worldwide scale, prayer might be trendy, but is this also the case in the Netherlands? There it seems that, in general, religion is old-fashioned and out-of-date, only practised by elderly people or particular groups. Compared to fifty years ago, the influence of the Christian church on daily life is enormously reduced (Felling, Peters, & Scheepers, 2000). Nowadays, most people attend church services only for marriages, funerals, or at Christmas, and the number of people who consider themselves to be church member continues to decrease (e.g. Dekker, de Hart, & Peters, 1997; te Grotenhuis & Scheepers, 2001). Moreover, in the social sciences, the Netherlands is known as one of the most secularised countries in the world (Halman, 2001; Lechner, 1996). Despite the invasive secularisation, we found, surprisingly, that about half of the Dutch youth prays (Janssen, de Hart, & den Draak, 1990). Moreover,

praying seems to be practised by more people than any other religious activity (Janssen, 2002).

Praying is the subject of this dissertation. We elaborate on the finding that many young people seem to pray regularly, a behaviour that is not likely to occur in a highly secularised society. This elicits several questions, such as: does this exceptional praying behaviour also occur among adults?, and how and why do they pray? The purposes of present investigation are to gain insight into the praying practices of the Dutch, and to find answers on above questions.

This chapter starts with a general background: a short history of prayer and a description of one of the most widespread prayers: prayers of healing. In paragraph 1.3, we will present a brief overview of empirical prayer studies that address the effects of praying. Then, we will outline the present research and subsequently address the research questions, in paragraph 1.4, and the research design in paragraph 1.5. We will end this introductory chapter by outlining the subsequent chapters.

1.1 A short history of prayer

We can assume that the oldest forms of prayers originated in a period long before recorded civilisation. Given that these prayers have an oral tradition, transmitted from generation to generation, it is impossible to trace their beginnings. The first evidences of early prayers are found in the magical rites of ancient primitive societies, probably tracing back to many centuries BC. The famous book of Heiler, *'Das Gebet'* (1921), and the work of di Nola (*'The prayers of man of all times and all cultures'*, 1975, 1961), both phenomenological studies, start with the prayers of ancient tribes: the oral transmissions of the Pygmies, Zulu's, Masai, Hopi, Sioux, and Aborigines, among others. The characteristic feature of most of these prayers is that they were songs, often chanted by a cantor and

answered by a chorus. They were typically collective prayers, fulfilling mainly a social function (e.g. Durkheim, 1912 [1995]).

Other remains of old prayers were found among ancient Chinese, ancient Egyptian, and Greco-Roman cultures (di Nola, 1961). These cultures had a vivid practice of worship rituals, such as portrayed on a clay seal from the Neo-Babylonian period (7-6 century BCE), where a priest prayed before the chief God of Babylon (Zaleski & Zaleski, 2005). The relics of the first written language contain a prayer: the Epic of Gilgamesh on the cuneiform tablets of ancient Babylon (c. 2750 BCE), where the women of Uruk begged the goddess to free them from their tyrannical king (Pratt, 1920). Some thousand years later, examples of prayers were found in all major cultures: the Rgevdā, one of the oldest scriptures from the Old-Hindu culture, contains more than 1000 prayer hymns (Zaleski & Zaleski, 2005). In Egypt, many prayers are engraved in the pyramids, in tombs, in pillars and sacrifice tables, and even on metal and stone scarabs, which were placed on the chest of the deceased (di Nola, 1961). Around 1000 BCE, a flourishing Hellenistic culture was found in Greece and meanwhile the first tribes of Moses have been established in Israel (Ploetz, 1983). New forms of religions and prayers evolved in these cultures, which constitute the roots of contemporary Jewish and Christian prayers. Moreover, the developments, which occurred in this period, can be considered to be the beginning of the contemporary Western culture (Heiler, 1921).

From the phenomenological work of Heiler and di Nola, among others, it is evident that praying is a universal religious phenomenon; it is a ritual practice that exists in all cultures. Moreover, despite the local characteristics of these prayers, a remarkable similarity emerges from the phenomenological descriptions; all over the world and at all times, people seem to pray for similar matters. They pray hymns to celebrate the gods and goddess, they pray for issues around life, such as burial, fertility and health, for all kind of aspects related to nature, such as prayers for the sun, moon, and animals, to celebrate morning and

evening, and last but definitely not least, for or against rain and fire (di Nola, 1961). Although praying is coloured by local traditions, it seems to serve general goals: to worship the Higher, marking life events, to classify and order life, to change the world, to provide answers on the incomprehensible, and aimed at the survival of the group.

1.2 Prayers of healing

In one way, contemporary prayers are not so much different from the prayers of ancient times. Praying addresses the fundamentals of life, and even nowadays, people pray for issues around illness and death. Moreover, praying for health is one of the most widespread forms of prayers (Hauenstein, 2002; Roberts, Ahmed, & Hall, 2006; Schmied, 1998; Zaleski & Zaleski, 2005). Not surprisingly, since healing is a 'leitmotiv', if not an overriding concern in most societies. Already in ancient times, prayers for health seem quite common. The bible offers numerous examples of God's interventions in life (e.g. Exodus, 15:26; 2 kings, 20:3; Luke, 8: 45-46). The psalmist prays: *'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed'*. Moreover, people love to hear stories of illness overcome by prayer (Zaleski & Zaleski, 2005). It strengthens the hope that with God all things truly are possible, that prayer is something more than the pursuit of unseen, unfelt, untested ideals, and that prayer, as William James puts it *'is something that is transacting, and work is really being done'* (James, 1995/1902, p.306).

In contemporary western societies, many prayers for health go even beyond traditional requests such as to be released from pain or to recover quickly after surgery. The tendency of today's prayers seems to focus on the well-being and personal benefits, i.e. to be healthy and, above all, to be happy. Prayer groups, such as the Silent Unity, respond to this growing trend, and they provide on their website daily prayers for health, happiness, and prosperity. These prayers are much in line

with the self-help spirituality of Louise Hay or '*A course in miracles*', and snapped up easily by 'spiritual seekers'. Sometimes the promised effects of prayer go even further than health, happiness, and spirituality. In the booklet '*The Prayer of Jabez*' (2000), Wilkinson, the author, promises that when the prayer of Jabez (containing the rather controversial wish 'Lord, enlarge my territory') is prayed daily, success is assured. His book is a bestseller in the US, and he himself is indeed a millionaire. Although Wilkinson's promises seem to us far-fetched, more and more contemporary prayers tend to become individualised prayers aimed at the welfare of the person (Janssen, 1998).

1.3 Psychology of prayer

The general importance on the benefits of prayer influences also the scientific research on prayers. Most of the scientific studies on prayers put the emphasis on the effects of prayers. In general, the effect studies can be divided in studies which examine the subjective effects of prayers (i.e. conceived effects of one's own prayers), and those which examine the objective effects of prayers (i.e. effects of intercessory or distant prayers carried out by others) (Francis & Evans, 1995).

These last studies (intercessory prayer studies) attract regularly a lot of attention in the press, because the outcomes are often considered as proof (or disproof) of a divine intervention. Although the debate about the interpretation of the results is still going on (e.g. Benson et al., 2006; Roberts, Ahmed, & Hall, 2006), we consider these studies as less interesting for several reasons (see also chapter 2). For one, the results are rather inconclusive and the methodological approach is questionable. Or as Brown put it: '*whether any material effects of prayer can be empirically detected is doubtful, both in principle and on methodological grounds*' (Brown, 1994, p.49).

In spite of the public attention the intercessory studies receive, many, if not most, studies of prayer are about the subjective effects (e.g. Brown, 1994; Finney & Malony, 1985; Francis & Astley, 2001; Francis & Evans, 1995). These studies concentrate on examining the effects of prayer among those who pray. The existing studies demonstrate relations between praying and a broad range of various aspects of mental and physical health. Among them studies which address the relation between praying and general well-being (Poloma & Pendleton, 1991), personal problems (Gruner, 1985), purpose in life (Richards, 1991; Carroll, 1993; Francis and Evans, 1995), positive attitude at school and self esteem (Francis, 1992; Francis & Gibbs, 1996), effects on psychotherapy (Finney & Malony, 1985), happiness (Francis & Lester, 1997), and so on. As regards research performed by medical sciences, we find innumerable studies in which praying is related to various medical problems. Varying from studies which focus on severe illnesses, such as cancer (e.g. Meraviglia, 2002; Taylor, Outlaw, Bernardo, & Roy, 1999) and HIV (Kaplan, Marks, & Mertens, 1997), to those which address prayer for less severe illnesses and health concerns in general (e.g. Barnes, Powell, McFann, & Nahin, 2002; Bell, et al., 2005; King, 2006; McCaffrey et al., 2004).

The studies that address subjective effects offer an important contribution, particularly, because these prayers may be a helpfully additional intervention for those people with mental or physical health problems. However, the effect studies are in other ways rather limited. Hardly attention is given to various types of prayer or to the praying process itself. Praying is taken for granted; only the effect counts. Therefore, we agree with Francis and Evans, among others, that '*the empirical study of prayer is an underdeveloped field of research*' (1995, p.372, e.g. Finney & Malony, 1985; Gill, 1987; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger & Gorsuch, 2003). Notwithstanding some worthwhile contributions, '*there is opportunity for much further empirical investigation on prayer*' (Finney & Malony, 1985, p.112).

1.4 Research questions

This study is embedded in the research line of the department of Cultural Psychology and Psychology of Religion of the Radboud University. In the 1980ties, a large-scale research on political and ideological views of youth showed that young people pray noticeably often (Janssen, de Hart, & den Draak, 1990; de Hart, 1994). This was a significant outcome. The general feeling at that time, certainly among scientists, was that since the sixties, religion was on the way out. The Netherlands was even a precursor of the secularisation process (Lechner, 1996). Therefore, follow-up studies were necessary to endorse this exceptional praying behaviour of youth. These studies, which followed in the 1990ties, revealed even more clearly that praying, despite a profound secularisation process, is practised by approximately half of the Dutch youth. In addition, the findings revealed that praying is a religious activity much more frequently practised than any other religious activity (Bänziger, 2001; Janssen, Prins, van der Lans, & Bearveldt, 2000).

Thus, it seems that young people pray relatively often, certainly compared to the frequency of, for example, attending church services. However, does this exceptional praying behaviour hold for the Dutch population as a whole? In other words, can the results of the youth studies be generalised to the Dutch population. Accordingly, to investigate the praying practices of adults new research is necessary. This new research addresses partly the same issues of the previous youth studies. In addition, it tries to determine what the underlying causes of this praying behaviour could be. Hence, the purposes of present investigation are:

- (1) *To describe the praying practices of the Dutch population.*
- (2) *To investigate why people still practise praying in a secularised country such as the Netherlands.*

To reach this twofold aim, three subsequent empirical studies will be carried out. In the first empirical study (chapter 3), we built on the studies which have been done among youth (Janssen et al., 1990; Janssen et al., 2000) and extend the research sample to a national Dutch sample. The earlier youth studies provide both methodological and theoretical foundations. With regard to the theoretical foundation, the earlier studies resulted in a definition of praying, a description of aspects related to praying practice, and a distinction of several types of prayer. These previous results constitute basically the starting point, and provide two new research questions: How do the Dutch pray?, and Which types of prayer can be distinguished? With regard to the methodological foundation, we use the same open-ended questions and the same qualitative analyses as in the youth studies. This research design will be described in the next paragraph.

In the second empirical study (chapter 4), we focus on one specific category of people: those who practise praying without attending church services. We have two reasons to focus upon them. First, in the Netherlands are more people who practise praying without attending church, than people who do both. Second, due to this particular group of people, the Netherlands can be considered, compared to other secularised countries, as a society with more '*prayers than believers*' (cf. Davie, 1994; Halman, Luijkx, & Zundert, 2005). That brings us to the next research question: what kind of people do practise private praying without attending church services? In this study, we also take into account the last research question: Why do people in a secularised society pray?

In the third empirical study (chapter 5), we investigate more in dept why people do practise praying. In this last chapter, we use a functional approach (i.e. religious coping) to investigate the causes of the Dutch praying behaviour.

To summarise, the present thesis addresses four research questions:

1. *How do people pray?*
2. *What kind of prayers can we distinguish?*
3. *What kind of people practise non-institutionalised prayers?*
4. *Why do people pray in a secularised society?*

1.5 Research design

To address the research questions, we will combine various methodological approaches.

First, qualitative data will be gathered by administering open-ended questions to a national sample. This method emerged in earlier research as a more appropriate method to acquire knowledge about prayer practices than a standardised prayer questionnaire (Janssen, 1990). Mainly, for the reason that the items of a standardised questionnaire are often too ‘conservative’ to capture recent developments. For example, the standardised prayer inventory in ‘*Measures of Religiosity*’ (Hill & Hood, 1999), consist of 28 items which refer to various aspects of prayer behaviour. Yet, half of the items refer to God, such as ‘*It is important to me to tell God about my sins or faults*’, and ‘*Most of my prayers are for God to solve problems*’. In Dutch society, these items would barely be endorsed, because many people who practise praying do not pray to God. Thus, the outcomes of a questionnaire with half of the items referring to God may underestimate or overlook the prayer practices of the Dutch. Open-ended questions, on the contrary, provide the possibility to grasp more or even unknown aspects of contemporary praying practices, for instance, prayers directed to a Higher Being.

Due to the time-consuming analyses procedure, qualitative analyses are usually performed only on small groups. The computer

program TexTable, however, makes it possible to analyse rather quickly open-ended questions on a large scale (details about the procedure in chapter 3, see also: www.texyz.com/textable). Therefore, we were able to analyse the answers on six open-ended questions in a national survey. Besides, TexTable provides another advantage: the qualitative data can be recoded in quantitative data and exported to SPSS. Thus, we can carry out various statistical analyses.

Secondly, the acquired qualitative data will be used to construct a 24-items prayer inventory with a 7-point Likert scale to measure varieties of prayer (details of the construction will be explained in chapter 5). The construction of this inventory enlarges the possibility of further research, such as correlational and explanatory studies. In the present thesis, this inventory is used in the last study to gain insight into the relation between prayer styles and religious coping. The inventory is also included in several ongoing studies.

Besides descriptive and correlational analyses, an explanatory study will be conducted, to investigate whether religious socialisation is a decisive factor in explaining the relation between praying practice and church attendance.

To summarise, throughout this thesis three important threads can be discerned. First, we will extend the previous youth studies (Janssen et al., 1990, 2000) to a large-scale and representative Dutch sample. Second, we will start with deductive research and end with inductive research strategies. Third, the successive studies will provide cumulating answers on the research questions and the two main purposes of this work.

1.6 Outline of the next chapters

In chapter 2, we will introduce the field of the psychology of praying. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide both theoretical and empirical foundations. First, we will give a short overview of empirical

research on praying. We focus on the problems facing intercessory prayer studies and next we describe the studies which focus on the subjective meaning of prayer. Thereupon, we present the results of previous studies (Janssen et al., 1990, 2000), in which young people answered open-ended questions on praying. The important issues of these studies are (1) the ritual structure of praying, derived from the open-ended questions, and (2) the distinction of various types of prayer, derived from the ritual structure. The chapter ends with some possible issues as regards the research on praying, such as the social aspects of praying described by the almost forgotten studies of Coe (1916) and Strong (1909), and a relation between types of praying and the religious coping styles of Pargament (1997).

Chapter 3 presents the results of a large-scale investigation into the praying practices of the Dutch. The following open-ended questions were asked: What is praying?, Where do you pray?, When do you pray?, How do you pray?, Why do you pray and what do you hope to achieve with praying? By analysing these qualitative data, we acquire insight into the praying behaviour of the Dutch and in types of prayer which fit individualised and non-institutionalised forms of religiosity. We will answer some fundamental questions such as: How do people define praying? Which varieties of prayer can adequately describe the contemporary prayer of the Dutch? What is the significance of these distinctions and how are they related? In the end, we will focus on the social dimension of prayer. Based on the theory of Coe and Strong, we will investigate the social or altruistic aspects of prayers of the Dutch by comparing the relation between motivations and effects.

In chapter 4, we elaborate on a remarkable result of the study described in chapter 3. There, it will emerge that most people in the Netherlands pray without attending church services, an indication of individualised religious practices of people who are not traditionally religious. This raises the question why do these people pray at all, even though they are not affiliated to a church. We will state the hypothesis

that due to former religious socialisation people still practise praying even if they are no longer affiliated to a particular church. To answer these questions and to test the hypothesis, we will compare three groups: (1) people who go to church and pray, (2) people who do not go to church but nevertheless pray, and (3) people who neither pray nor go to church. Research has demonstrated that church attendance influences religious motivations, beliefs and experiences, and that religion influences people's level of mental health, helping behaviour, and prejudice (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). Thus, we will compare the three distinguished groups on the above religious and non-religious attitudes and behaviours, and subsequently test the hypothesis whether religious socialisation influences the variances in praying behaviour.

In chapter 5, three different aspects come together. First, we will develop a prayer inventory, based on the answers of the open-ended questions of chapter 3. The development of such a prayer inventory may be a fruitful approach to measure prayer practices and varieties in secularised societies. Secondly, we go back to a notion stated in chapter 2. In the discussion of that chapter, we addressed some interesting subjects for further research, such as the relation between varieties of praying and religious coping styles of Pargament (1997). In present chapter, this notion will be completed and worked out. Thirdly, in chapter 4 it will emerge that a religious practice such as praying is not only a matter of being brought up religiously, or being member of a church. Other motivations may be responsible for praying behaviour, in particular the praying practices of those people who are not traditionally religious. Since many studies showed that praying is an effective way to cope with problems (e.g. Brown, 1994; Janssen et al., 2000; Pargament, 1997), praying might fulfil a necessary psychological function. Hence, in this last study, we will focus on religious coping and address several research questions: Which varieties can be distinguished with the prayer inventory?, Is praying related to coping?, and Which varieties of praying are related to which styles of religious coping?

Finally, in chapter 6, we will summarise the results, draw conclusions about the meaning of praying in the Dutch society, describe the limitation of present work, and propose some issues for further research and discussion.

CHAPTER 2

PRAYING AS A UNIVERSALISING VARIABLE.²

2.1 Introduction

Ever since the emergence of modern empirical psychology, now more than a hundred years ago, prayer has been an important issue on the agenda (James, 1995/1902; Strong, 1909; Pratt 1920; Heiler, 1921; Hodge, 1931; Finney & Malony, 1985; Wulff, 1991; Brown, 1994; Francis & Evans, 1995). Founding fathers like William James and Wilhelm Wundt were among the first psychologists who theorised and did preliminary research on the subject. Two main conclusions have recurred time and again.

First. Prayer is the essential topic in the psychology of religion. Prayer is '*the very soul and essence of religion*' (James, 1985, p. 365); it is '*the most spontaneous and the most personal expression of religion*' (Heiler, 1958, p. 353); '*the most characteristic expression of religious life*' (Brede Kristensen, 1971, p. 417); '*a universal religious phenomenon*', '*an essential element in all religion*' (Selbie, 1924, p. 207, p. 218); '*prayer is wide as the world and older than history*', '*prayer is an instinct of the human heart*' (D'Arcy, 1918, p. 171); '*a history and psychology of prayer would almost be equivalent to a history and psychology of religion*' (Coe, 1916, p. 302). It would not be difficult to extend this list. The conclusion would be the same as the one Hodge draw: '*prayer is the centre and soul of all religion*' (quoted in Francis & Evans, 1995).

Second. There is no conclusive research on the psychology of prayer. In 1911 Pratt concluded: '*so little attempt (is being) made to study empirically what is perhaps the most important and most vital fact of religion*' (p. 48). In 1985 Finney and Malony repeated this complaint: '*Nowhere is*

² This chapter is a slightly adapted version of: Janssen, J. & Bänziger, S. (2003). Praying as a universalising variable. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 25, 100-112.

the longstanding breach between psychology and religion more evident than in the lack of research on prayer' (p. 104). Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger and Gorsuch (1996) concluded that there is still little known about the phenomenology of prayer, and Francis and Evans noted: *'it is clear, however, from the major text books in the psychology of religion that the empirical study of prayer is an underdeveloped field of research'* (1995, p. 372). The list of quotes could be easily extended, and once again the conclusion would be the same as the one Gill (1987) draw in the Encyclopaedia of Religion: *'the general study of prayer is undeveloped and naïve'* (p. 489).

So, while prayer is an essential topic in the psychology of religion, it has not received the attention it deserves. It does also not get the right attention, as we hope to show. Too much effort has been put into the study of the objective effects of prayer; too little research has been done on the process of prayer as such. Following a brief history of the psychology of prayer, we will introduce our own research. It focuses on the question of what prayer is, in search of a phenomenology of prayer, and on the subjective meaning of prayer. In the conclusion, we will, first, focus on a remarkable relation between the religious coping styles of Pargament (1997) and varieties of praying, and, second, return to the promising but forgotten psychological studies on prayer by Anna Louise Strong (1909) and George Albert Coe (1916).

2.1.1 A brief history of prayer research

From the beginning of psychology until our days, people and psychologists have been asking whether prayer actually achieves anything. Will we get cured, will it rain if we pray? Sir Francis Galton, who introduced statistics into psychology, did the first empirical studies in 1873. His conclusions were negative. The British royal family, a family that people prayed for daily, turned out to be rather unhealthy. Neither people who pray a great deal, nor people for whom others pray live spectacularly longer. The average lifespan of the clergy was found to be

slightly longer than that of people in other professions (lawyers, doctors) but that could be explained by the easy country life they live. Galton was widely criticised, on both methodological and theological grounds (Wulff, 1991). After nearly a century, in the nineteen-sixties, Galton's approach was taken up again. This time based on a solid, well-designed experimental approach, in a double-blind clinical trial. The results, presented by Joyce and Welldon (1965), were as negative as those of Galton, to whom they tribute their endeavour. No objective efficacy of prayer was found. However then, in 1988, Randolph Byrd found positive therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer in a Coronary Care Unit population. As in the case of Joyce and Welldon, the approach was based on a double-blind experiment. As in Galton's time, his research met with a great deal of criticism, but this time there were also positive and even enthusiastic reactions. Several spectacular, large-scale research projects followed in the wake of his success, for instance Harris et al., (1999), and Benson et al., (2006).

Overall, we would say that the results are as yet pretty much inconclusive. We share the conclusions of Sloan and colleagues in *The Lancet* of February 1999, that '*even in the best studies, the evidence of an association between religion, spirituality and health is weak and inconsistent*'. One of the methodological problems is the interpretation of the independent variable, i.e. whether or not the effects of the intercessory prayer can be ascribe to God or a Divine intervention. The studies of Byrd and Harris and others implicitly assume that God will play along with the experiment and cure those for whom prayers have been said, while turning his divine back on the rest. Surely, this is not only a shallow understanding of divine mercy, but it also reveals a misunderstanding of experimental designs. The causal relation in an experiment should be caused *directly* by the independent variable, not by a mediating variable. In the intercessory studies, it is presumed that the effects are caused by God as a mediating variable. The problem with this interpretation is, for example (although not likely), that the effective

intervention could also be caused by some person with a telepathic view and the gift of distant healing (van der Does, 2000).

However, the critique goes also beyond methodology. In our opinion, one can no longer speak of a psychological approach when the consciousness of the individual under study is methodologically ruled out. A vague or suppressed consciousness is food for psychologists, but zero consciousness is psychologically unmanageable. In the double-blind approach on distant or remote prayer the subjects who are prayed for do not know that they are prayed for and some approaches are even triple-blind and no informed consent is asked at all. The elimination of consciousness is seen as essential, which even leads to the proposition that it would be preferable to study the effect of intercessory prayer on microbes and plants (Dossey, 1997).

According to us, a definite answer was given by a study regarding intercessory prayer conducted in the year 2006; a Cochrane Meta analysis (Roberts, Ahmed, & Hall, 2006). The Cochrane Collaboration is an international non-profit and independent organisation, dedicated to making accurate information about the effects of healthcare readily available worldwide (<http://www.cochrane.org/docs/descrip.htm>). The reviews of the Cochrane Collaboration are now a highly regarded source of evidence, because these reviews are regularly updated as more information becomes available and in response to comments and criticisms.

As regards the meta-analyses of the intercessory prayer studies, this accuracy lead, first of all, to a substantial reduction of studies which fulfilled the scientific criteria. Finally only four studies left; those of Byrd, et al. (1988), Harris, et al. (1999), Joyce and Welldon (1965), and Collipp (1969). In short, the following conclusions were drawn:

'There was no evidence that prayer affected the numbers of people dying from leukaemia or heart disease.(...) Intercessory prayer did not clearly decrease the odds of people with heart problems experiencing a bad or intermediate outcome, but this finding was moved towards the null by inclusion of a negative

assumption for those who were dropped from the analysis in one study.(...) Prayer increased the odds of readmission to the Coronary Care Unit, but these results are made significantly negative by the inclusion of an assumption of poor outcome for those not accounted for in the final analyses.' (Roberts, Ahmed, & Hall, 2006, p.1). Overall, no significant effects of the intercessory prayers were found.

So, our final conclusion could be that this is the end of double-blind intercessory studies. But nothing could be further from the truth. Only a few months after the Cochrane study, Herbert Benson and colleagues (2006) published their findings. Benson received 2.4 million dollars from the Templeton foundation (a great deal of money compared to the 2.3 million dollars which the US government has spent on prayer research since 2000), to prove the benefits of the intercessory prayers for cardiac heart patients. However, the outcome points to a different and unexpected result as the Volkskrant headlines on 8th April, 2006: *'Vertel een hartpatiënt nooit dat je voor hem bidt, dat wordt zijn dood'* ('Never tell a cardiac patient that you pray for him, it will be his death'). Indeed, the results showed that there was no effect found on the recovery of people who were unaware of these intercessory prayers, but the patients who knew they were being prayed for had a significant higher rate of post-operative complications (Benson et al., 2006). Again, this study evoked many reactions, from the one that it was a waste of money to the one that it presupposes supernatural intervention, so putting it, by definition, beyond the reach of science. Benson's reaction was only: *'the findings were not the last word on the effects of the so-called intercessory prayer'*, but Charles Bethea, co-author of the study, made finally a very good point: *'One conclusion from this is that the role of awareness of prayer should be studied further. (...) It may have made them uncertain, wondering, 'Am I so sick they had to call in their prayer team?'* (Herald Tribune, 1-2 April 2006).

Hence, the study of the objective effects of prayer leads to a dead end, both in psychology and theology. William James (1985/1902), on the other hand, stressed the possible importance of subjective effects. Emile

Durkheim (1995/1912) did the same and pointed to the source of the misunderstanding: '*L'efficacité morale du rite, qui est réelle, a fait croire à son efficacité physique, qui est imaginaire*' ('The power of the rite over minds, which is real, made them believe in its power over things, which is imaginary'. p. 364). Gilbert, Brown, Pinel and Wilson (2000) came essentially to the same conclusion based on social psychological experiments. People underestimate psychological processes and '*confuse their own optimisation of subjective reality with an external agent's optimisation of objective reality*' (p. 698). Already Sir Francis Galton (1873) noted '*a confident sense of communion with God must necessarily rejoice and strengthen the heart, and divert it from petty cares (...) it is found to give serenity during the trials of life and in the shadow of approaching death*' (1872, p. 135). It is an old piece of wisdom that prayer is not meant to change God but to change the individual who prays. Saint Augustine, the famous Christian Church Father around the year 400, said that one should pray '*ut ipsa (mens) construatur, non ut Deus instruatur*', that is, you should pray to construct your soul, not to instruct God. The famous philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (/1961/1847) came to the same conclusion on the subject of confession, a specific type of prayer: '*The prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who offers it. (...) Not God, but you, the maker of the confession, get to know something by your act of confession*' (p. 44-45).

2.2 Empirical prayer studies

If prayer is a purely subjective affair, why would people pray to God? What is prayer anyway, and how do people pray in practice? Most psychological research on prayer does not ask these questions. The prayer process is handled as a black box. Only input and output count, and what happens in between is taken for granted. In our research (Janssen, de Hart, & den Draak, 1990; Janssen, Prins, van der Lans, &

Baerveldt, 2000) we have tried to develop a full phenomenological description of prayer as a psychological process. We did so by studying the literature on prayer and subsequently by analysing empirical data derived from open-ended questions (Janssen, 1990). The research leads to the following conclusions.

The *first* thing that became clear from the theoretical study is that prayer can be described as an act. We therefore prefer to use the term ‘praying’.

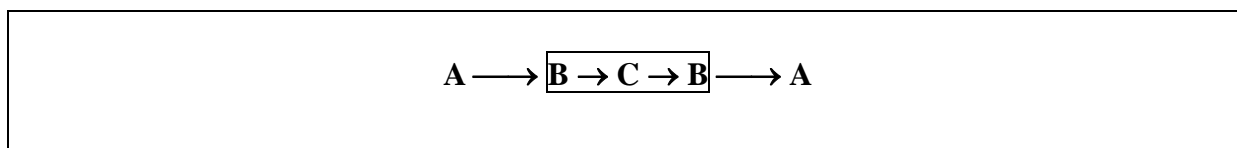


Figure 1. A minimal model for a ritual, according to Frits Staal (1978).

A→B: enter, C: action, B→A: exit; : boundary ritual place.

Second. The act of praying typically has a tripartite structure, as all acts do. There is a beginning, a middle part and an end. This structure can be found in all kinds of rituals. In a lecture, the scientist of religion Frits Staal (1978) described it as to enter, to abide and subsequently leave a sanctuary (Figure 1).

In various studies the tripartite structure, as described by Staal, can be distinguished. We mention here Henri Huberts and Marcel Mauss (1899) and Emile Durkheim’s (1995/1912) definition of the sacrifice; William James’ (1985/1902) study on the varieties of religious experience; Arnold van Gennep’s (1909) ‘rite de passage’; Marcel Mauss’ (1925) description of the gift; and Berggren’s (1975) approach of confession (Figure 2).

Turner (1994) stresses the tripartite structure of Hindu rituals and Buddhist praying, and Wegman (2000) points at several places to the tripartite structure of Christian rituals.

A recent study on the praying of Muslims and Christians revealed the same tripartite structure: *'The narratives begin with a problem or need. (...) The problem or need motivates the informant to pray to God; the solution consist of God's answer to the prayer. (...) The structure of the narratives is complication – prayer act – dénouement'* (Lindgren, 2001, p. 194). Likewise, the act of praying can be defined in three: there is a need, an action and an effect.

STAAL	A → B	C	B → A
1. praying (Janssen et al.)	need	action	effect
2. la sacrifice (Durkheim)	entrée	sacrifice propre	sortie
3. the varieties of religious experience (James)	sick soul	conversion	health/ecstasy
4. rite de passage (van Gennep)	séparation	marge	aggregation
5. le don (Mauss)	donner	recevoir	rendre
6. confession (Berggren)	guilt	confession	mercy

Figure 2. The structure of rituals. 1. Janssen et al.: praying; 2. Hubert & Mauss and Durkheim: the sacrifice; 3. James: the varieties of religious experience; 4. van Gennep: rite de passage; 5. Mauss: the gift; 6. Berggren: confession.

Third. The act of praying is performed in a three-dimensional space that consists of time and place and a third, vertical dimension which we called the direction of praying (mostly named 'God' by our subjects). This act can be represented as a speech act: a performing utterance, that uses words to do things, and it is expressed in a bodily posture (Figure 3). To summarise: praying is the bodily and/or linguistic expression of a tripartite act in a three-dimensional space.

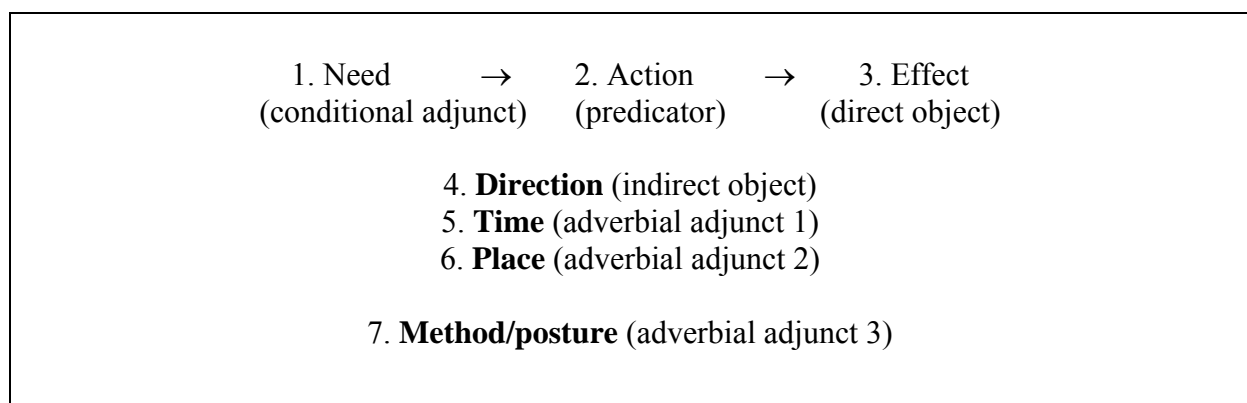


Figure 3. A model for praying practices of modern young people (Janssen et al., 1990).

Fourth. This abstract structure can take several forms, according to the specific needs, the specific method, and time et cetera, either chosen by the person or prescribed by tradition. We studied the praying of young people living in a secularised society. The prototypical praying of Dutch youths goes as follows: faced with negative problems, like sickness and death affecting others, mostly friends and relatives, these young people ask, hope or meditate, directing their praying to God, looking for their own emotional relief, at night, with their eyes closed and hands joined, lying in bed (Table 1).

The praying of youth is spontaneous; it is a form of reflection at the end of the day, when body and mind take a rest. So, while previous research (Deikman, 1966; Benson, 1975) showed that praying has the bodily effect of tuning consciousness between active thought and deep sleep, it seems that the reverse is true in a secularised context where no specific moments and places are allocated for praying. Here, the profound human need for praying emerges, when the paramount reality of every day life is interrupted and a mode of passive receptivity has set in.

The next finding is that most praying is based on negative events. This is almost classical: hardships teach people to pray, as we say in Dutch.

Table 1. Categories used to score the descriptions of praying behaviour. Frequencies are mentioned between brackets. (N=687)

need (408):	<u>negative</u> (346), <u>others</u> (207), concrete (142), positive (105), neutral (85), regularly (29).
action (561):	to <u>ask/hope</u> (201), to <u>meditate</u> (197), dialogue (183), to thank (82), to propound (73).
direction (330):	<u>God</u> (207), someone (69), power (50), myself (42).
effect (398):	<u>emotional</u> (286), cognitive (129), religious (74), real (73).
place (403):	<u>in bed</u> (215), anywhere (101), at home (91), church (69), room (30), countryside (36), else (26).
time (385):	<u>at night</u> (223), anytime (128), at dinner (55), in the morning (26), fixed (23).
method (394):	<u>eyes closed</u> (119), <u>hands joined</u> (104), think (91), talk (59), lying down (45), to myself (43), quiet (39), formula (40), sit down (37).

However, while the praying of youth mostly starts with the problems of others (relatives and friends) it is not an intercessory praying (Bänziger, 2001). Youth pray for their own sake: to gain the strength and the courage to endure the sadness they feel for other people's sake. Praying aims at gaining secondary control by bringing oneself in line with environmental forces (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982). It does not aim at directly changing the situation but at a psychological change in the person who prays, eventually enabling that person to change the situation (for instance in praying before examinations). Praying is essentially a coping mechanism in which people actively cope with negative events, described by Pargament and colleagues as a self-directing style of problem-solving (Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway, Grevengoed, Newman, & Jones, 1988).

An interesting finding is the direction of praying. We did not mention it in our questions: we asked the youngsters what praying in their opinion is, and when, where, how and why they do it. They spontaneously formulated a direction, mostly called God. This is remarkable, especially for those, the majority, who say they are not a

church member. God is vague for them and youth can hardly find the language to express His existence. He is mostly called simply ‘something or someone’ (Janssen, de Hart, & Gerardts, 1994). But it seems essential that He is there. That someone is watching. That you are not alone. God is not known, He is used, as Leuba (1900/01) once said. People indeed seem to have a strong tendency to presume the presence or the efficacy of what Gilbert, Brown, Pinel and Wilson (2000) call ‘external agency’.

Fifth. Our structural definition was also used to distinguish varieties of praying, depending on the stress that is put on the main structural elements: need, action, effect and direction (Figure 4). Using some of Heiler’s (1958) definitions of prayers, we predicted four varieties of praying; petitionary praying, religious praying, meditative praying and psychological praying.

<i>Prayers</i>	<i>Components of praying</i>		<i>direction</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>method/ time/ pla</i>
	<i>need</i>	<i>action</i>			
petitionary	concrete problem	ask	God / power	<u>Real</u>	<i>public ritual</i>
religious	positive / guilt	thank	<u>God</u>	Faith	<i>public ritual</i>
meditative	continuous	<u>meditate / think</u>	power / self	cognitive	<i>individual ritual</i>
psychologic	<u>concrete problem</u>	meditate	power / self	emotional	<i>individual ritual</i>

Figure 4. Prediction for four varieties of praying: a combination of some definitions of praying by Heiler (1958) and the praying model of modern youth (Janssen et al., 1990). Underlined items reflect the main component of each praying type.

In *religious praying* the main emphasis is on the direction of praying: the other elements are derived from it. God is central. The action takes the form of a dialogue or thanksgiving, the effect we would expect is faith or a deeper communion with God. The need is also a derived element: is

can be positive (to praise God) or negative, based on sin or guilt that we ask forgiveness for.

In *petitionary praying* the direction can be the same as in religious praying but the constitutive element here is the effect. Moreover, the effect has to be real. The action can be defined as asking and the need of the person as the reverse of the effect. Some believe this kind of praying, perhaps in combination with religious praying, to be the oldest one (Capps, 1982).

In *meditative praying* the action is the center of attention. Need and effect seem to be rather abstract, continuous and cognitive.

The fourth variety is called *psychological praying*: it is based on the need, without claiming a fitting effect. Heiler (1958) already described it, by stating that the native language of all language is a cry. There is a universal impulse to pray, '*to cry out for the help we need, for the good we want*' (Pratt, 1910/11, p. 50). The action and the effects are rather vague, not typically religiously inspired.

Regarding method, time and place we only made the general prediction that meditative and psychological praying are more individually oriented, and that religious and petitionary praying are more often said in public.

The four dimensions we predicted could indeed be discerned in a factor analysis, but the most surprising result was the importance of time, place and method for each dimension. Religious prayer is mainly said in church, quietly, at fixed moments, and petitionary prayer mostly in one's room, in the morning, using praying formulas. Meditative prayer can be said anytime and anywhere: it could be defined as portable praying and it is typically done cognitively, by thinking. Psychological prayer is said at night, lying in bed, hands joined, and eyes closed (for details: Janssen et al., 2000).

The factor analysis in one way points to an ideal-typical solution. Although we distinguished the four factors we expected, it turned out that there is a substantial correlation in our population between

petitionary and religious praying. A second order factor analysis showed an inter-correlation between the psychological factor with both the religious/petitionary factor and meditative factor. Therefore, it was concluded that prayers combine various elements, and most prayers contain psychological aspects.

2.3 Summary and discussion

The preceding empirical research shows that praying can be described as a tripartite structure in a three-dimensional space. In other words, praying is the bodily and/or linguistic expression of need, action and effect, in a three-dimensional space of time, place and direction. The second main conclusion is the distinction of several varieties of praying. These varieties were primary based on the structural elements: need, action effect and direction, but also correspond with the structural elements: time, space and method. They can be seen as different types of prayer but preferably as different aspects of praying, whereby each actual praying is a unique combination of these aspects.

Let us conclude by considering new, and as we think, promising approaches to the psychology of praying. First, we will discuss the relation between the four varieties of praying and Pargament's styles of problem solving. Second, we will point to an old tradition in the psychology of praying that deserves reconsideration.

First: Pargament and colleagues distinguished three styles or modes of problem-solving that correspond to three of our types of praying. In the deferring mode of problem-solving, God is active but the person is passive. This mode matches the petitionary praying. In the collaborative mode, both God and the person are active, which matches the religious praying. The self-directing mode matches what we call psychological praying: the person is active but God is passive. Following the logic of this classification, a fourth style of problem solving is

conceivable, in which both God and the individual are passive. Pargament and colleagues do not define this mode, but it fits in perfectly with our meditative praying. Meditative praying is what we would call a receptive mode, in which responsibility for problem-solving is neither located in the individual, nor God. Acceptance characterises the attitude of the person who meditates (Figure 5).

Praying and coping types		Person	
		active	passive
God	active	collaborative mode <u>religious praying</u>	deferring mode <u>petitionary praying</u>
	passive	self-directing mode <u>psychological praying</u>	<i>receptive mode</i> <u>meditative praying</u>

Figure 5. Three styles of problem-solving found by Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway, Grevengoed, Newman & Jones (1988) (bold items), compared with the prediction for four varieties of praying (underlined items). (The receptive mode is not distinguished by Pargament)

Second: Modern psychology is seeing a rediscovery of the cultural, contextual and narrative aspects of human behaviour. Man is a social being, realising itself in culture and history. Hermans and Kempens' study on the dialogical self (1993) is a fascinating example. They describe man as a continual dialogue, following Giambattista Vico's philosophy of corporeal imagination, based upon the propositions that human knowledge is embodied and knowing is relating to other people. As psychologists, they resume the symbolic interactionist's views of Charles Cooley and George Herbert Mead in a new way. Their approach seems promising for the study of praying. It has set us on the track of an old and since behaviourism forgotten tradition in the psychology of praying, also based on the ideas of Cooley and Mead. In 1909, in a small book

entitled *The psychology of prayer*, rightly called ‘a most excellent little book’ by Pratt (1910/11), Anna Louise Strong (1909) defined prayer as the ‘direct interaction of two selves arising simultaneously in consciousness, as result of a need, a lack, a disturbance which demands the presence of a completer and more adequate self before it can be overcome’ (p. 24); ‘Prayer is, then, a social relation which has as aim the attainment of a wider, less partial self – a more confident self, a self more strong to endure, a self of larger sympathies, a more truly ethical, more completely social self’ (p. 30). ‘The end sought is rest, that rest which comes to the self of immediate desire through appreciative sharing in a self which symbolises the movements of infinite ages of time, -- the self of the widest aesthetic contemplation’ (p. 82).

George Albert Coe (1916), ‘a noted psychologist of religion’ as Hood et al., (1996, p. 4) call him, comes to similar conclusions in a small chapter in his book on the psychology of religion: ‘Prayer is a process in which faith is generated’. Even negative experience can be integrated: ‘the prayer life may be said to be the organisation into the self of the very things that threaten to disorganise it’ (p. 316n). By praying, mankind puts its needs on a higher level, subordinating them to God’s plans. In Christianity, where love is a central motif, this leads to social universalism: ‘the function of prayer (..) is then to produce (..) personal life, which is also social life, as something of ultimate worth’ (p. 320).

These interesting considerations eloquently clarify our findings although our results do not mesh with their predictions. While Strong and Coe emphasise that in prayer personal problems (ego) are put on a higher, social level (alter), it seems that our youth is doing the reverse by personalising social problems (Bänziger, 2001). Social scientists may suppose lofty motives and high objectives of meaning giving in the praying of people, but many people just pray for help, real help; for success, real success, for health, real health. The recent popularity in the US of Jabez’ prayer (‘Lord, enlarge my territory!’) speaks volumes (Wilkinson, 2000). More recently, and not only in the US, we see a praying that reminds us to Mark Twain’s ‘war prayer’, a prayer that

explicitly or implicitly asks for the extinction of others (our 'enemies'). Psychologists of religion of course have to deal with the basic needs and natural motives of mankind. However, they cannot ignore the fact that religions are not just the passive receptors of needs and motives. They also shape them. Religions shape the lives of people, structuring space and time, making sense, giving meaning. An impressive illustration is of these processes is Leon Wieseltiers book *Kaddish* (1998). As a non practising Jew, he nevertheless completed the Kaddish for his deceased father: a prayer said in schul three times a day, a whole year long. This practice did not change God, who is praised and justified in the Kaddish-prayer, it did not produce miracles, it did not destroy enemies, but it refreshed Wieseltiers life with language: 'three times a day Hebrew music' (p. 82); the Kaddish ritual structured the mourning process; the hurried pace of Wieseltiers modern existence was slowed down. In the end it changed his life completely.

Let us not forget that praying is not just an intellectual, cognitive affair, that it is not just a matter of language. In terms of language, it can be defined primarily as a speech-act, and as an act it refers to bodily movements. Turner (1994), in a short experiential study on Christian, Aboriginal, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic prayer, concluded that '*perhaps on the level of music and musical form - and on this level only - there is any real correspondence in the diverse religious traditions*' (p. 82). However, there is more that unites mankind. Not only vibrations, but also bodily movements as expressed in praying. Recently Lindgren (2001) stressed the importance of the bodily movements in the praying process. The bodily movement serves two functions; on the one hand, as an externalisation of inner feelings, thoughts, and attitudes, and, on the other, as a means to influence themselves experientially. Harry Kempen (2002) stressed the importance of the human body as the unifying carrier of human life: '*as the body is universal and self interpretations are spatio-temporal variations on bodily data and thus universal self-variables, psychology can contribute to the universalising of loyalties; then she is - as the APA*

pretends - a means of promoting human welfare' (see also Kempen, 1996).
Praying can be defined as a universalising variable. That is why praying
is the centre and soul of all religion.

CHAPTER 3

PRAYING, AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

OF PRAYING PRACTICES IN A SECULAR SOCIETY.³

Research from the Netherlands has pointed out that, despite the steady decline of church membership and church attendance, religious rituals, such as praying are still widely present. The present study examines the structure and varieties of prayer, by analysing answers to open-ended questions of a representative Dutch survey. It is concluded, first, that praying in general is considered as an act with an effect, performed in the presumed presence of another. More in particular, praying can be defined as a ritual act with a tripartite structure of need, action, and effect, in a three dimensional space of direction, place and time. Second, four varieties of prayer were distinguished; petitionary, religious, meditative, and psychological prayer. Finally, the structure and varieties are combined, which results in (1) a characterisation of each type of prayer, and (2) a distinction between the (social) need to pray and (self related) effects of praying.

3.1 Introduction

Praying is a widespread, important religious phenomenon from all places and all times that even survives in the individualised and secularised societies of Europe (Halman, 2001). Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1975) recommended the study of praying because praying seems to be a more resistant religious phenomenon than church membership and church attendance. Nevertheless, rather few empirical researches have been devoted to this type of private religious practice. Fundamental questions still have to be addressed: how do people define praying, how is praying practised, which varieties of praying can be distinguished?

Empirical studies addressing these questions focus mainly on the description of varieties of prayer. In two very early empirical studies

³ This chapter is an adapted version of: Bänziger, S., Janssen, J., & Scheepers, P. Praying: An empirical study of praying practices in a secular society (resubmitted in *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*)

(Beck, 1906; Pratt, 1910/11), two prayer types were distinguished: petitionary prayer and prayer of communion. These two types are still apparent, but such a rough classification may be no longer adequate to describe the prayer practices in contemporary Western society. An example of a more extensive classification is of Heiler (1921) who distinguished nine prayer types in his famous book '*Das Gebet*': the naive prayer of primitive man, the ritual prayer formula, the hymn, prayer in the religion of Greek Civilization, prayer in philosophical thought, the prayer in the individual piety of great religious personalities, the individual prayer of great poets and artists, prayer in public congregational worship and the individual prayer as a religious duty and good work. Heiler's classification seems disparate, outdated and hardly workable.

Recently, new studies of prayer types appeared and an old research tradition revived. Poloma and Gallup (1991) defined four different types: colloquial, petitional, ritual, and meditative prayer. Hood, Morris and Harvey (Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003) distinguished four rather similar types: contemplative, liturgical, petitionary and material prayers. Laird, Snyder, Rapoff, and Green (2004) defined five types: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and reception. Luckow and colleagues distinguished six prayer types: confession, petition, ritual, meditation-improvement, habit, and compassionate petition (Hill & Hood, 1999).

According to Ladd and Spilka (2002), these studies have as yet several limitations: (1) they lack a theoretical framework because they rely primarily on consensus based categories, (2) most studies intermingle affective, behavioural and cognitive items, and (3) they are difficult to compare because several levels of categorisation are used. In an attempt to overcome previous shortcomings, Ladd and Spilka (2002) proposed three prayer types: inward, outward and upward prayer. These types, which Ladd and Spilka derive of a typology made by Foster (1992), represent cognitive aspects of the direction of the prayers, or as

Ladd and Spilka (2002, p. 475) put it: 'the concept of prayer-as-connection'. The inward prayer type represents the connection with oneself, the outward type is the connection human-human and the upward prayer type represents the connection human-divine.

The advantage of Ladd and Spilka's approach is that it is grounded in theory and surpasses consensus based categorisation. Nevertheless, they designed a pre-structured questionnaire, which might be less appropriate in individualised settings where religious institutions weaken and shared definitions evaporate, like has happened in the Netherlands over the last decades (Becker & Vink, 1994; Dekker, de Hart, & Peters, 1997; Felling, Peters, & Scheepers, 1993, 2000). Answers to open-ended questions are needed to detect changing and emerging configurations of religiosity, hidden in the personal feelings, acts and opinions of people.

3.1.1 Questions

Comparing the present study with the studies of Poloma and Gallup, Hood et al., Laird et al., Ladd and Spilka, and the others mentioned above, two main advantages can be mentioned beforehand. First, this study is based on a large representative sample of the Dutch population, instead of the commonly used student samples. Second, analyses are performed on answers of open-ended questions, which is considered a more appropriate method to study individualised religious practices, such as praying, in a secularised and individualised society. This approach will lead to a thick description of the phenomenon of prayer within the framework of a survey. The following questions will be addressed. How do people define praying? Which varieties of prayer can adequately describe the contemporary prayer of the Dutch? What is the significance of these distinctions and how are they related? Which needs or motives do people have to pray and for which effects do they pray, and, in particular, what is the relation between these two aspects?

The empirical findings of the previous studies of Janssen et al. (Janssen, de Hart, & den Draak, 1990; Janssen, Prins, van der Lans, & Baerveldt, 2000), as described in previous chapter, provide the theoretical background of present investigation.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Data

The data for this study are from a (Dutch) nationwide survey, conducted in the year 2000 (Eisinga et al., 2002, N=1008). This survey, which has been carried out every five years since 1979, contains questions on religious and secular attitudes and behaviours (Eisinga et al., 2002). The sample was composed by means of a two-stage random procedure. First, municipalities have randomly been selected, including a number of so-called self-weighted cities. Second, a random sample of respondents, in between 18 and 70 years of age, was selected out of the registers of these municipalities. These potential respondents received an introduction letter and thereafter were contacted by interviewers asking them to participate in a face to face interview. A number of 2896 potential respondents were contacted of which 1008 agreed to cooperate, i.e., a response rate of 43.7%. This sample turned out to be representative of the Dutch population regarding the national distribution of gender and marital status. We found, however, small deviations from the national age distributions, i.e. respondents younger than 29 were somewhat underrepresented relative to their proportions in the population. Approximately 40% of this sample considered themselves to belong to a religious denomination which is in line with the longitudinal secularisation trend in the Netherlands (Grotenhuis, te. & Scheepers, 2001). The respondents were then asked to fill out another part of the questionnaire, containing a number of open-ended questions regarding prayer. About 89% of the respondents answered the prayer questions.

3.2.2 Procedure and analyses

In present study, six open-ended questions were analysed: 1) 'what is prayer to you?', 2) 'where do you pray?', 3) 'when do you pray?', 4) 'how do you pray?', 5) 'when do you feel the need to pray?', and 6) 'what do you hope to achieve with prayer?'. The open-ended questions on praying contained 112 missing values, from the remaining 896 respondents 62% reported to actually practise praying, varying from sometimes to often, which implies that people without a particular religious denomination also tend to pray.

The open-ended responses of the participants were analysed with the computer program *TexTable* (Janssen, 1990)¹. *TexTable* was constructed for the content analysis of open-ended answers in large data sets. In fact two data sets - the data set containing responses to closed questions and the data set containing texts - are connected by an identical respondent number. By connecting the two data sets, *TexTable* enables the communication between qualitative data and quantitative data, or between texts and figures. This communication takes two steps: first, texts are coded into numbers, the common procedure in content analysis. Second, the qualitative results are used to highlight the quantitative results.

In this paragraph, the first step (from texts to numbers) will be explained. The smallest empirical elements in a content analysis are the numerous words. The most general and shortest description of the whole text are the structural elements of the definition of praying as a three partite structure in a three dimensional space. The analysis now proceeds in two directions: top down and bottom up; from the words to the definition and from the definition to the words, trying to bridge the gap between the two. As a first result, *TexTable* constructs a list of all words, arranged in order of frequency. Function words are removed. Generally, verbs, adjectives and nouns give the best information. Then synonyms are gathered in word strings. This procedure results in a list of

content categories (see for instance Table 1 where analyses of six open-ended questions resulted in 60 categories, mainly consisting of verbs and nouns). By simultaneously analysing top-down, the list is more than just a list. The categories are ordered as structural elements that fit into the definition of prayer. The whole takes the hierarchical shape of a tree diagram (Mayring, 1988; Janssen, 1990) from numerous words, to many synonyms, to less (60) content categories, to six structural elements (ordered categories), to one structural definition. After stripping all coded words from the texts, a general inspection is made of the remains. If the remains contain no additional information, the analysis can be concluded and the results can be transported to the data set containing numeric information. Of course, the same text can be analysed in different ways, depending on the research question. In this example, the structural definition of prayer is the general, top down idea that guides the whole procedure.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 The structure of praying

The first question we like to address is how people define prayer. Previous research (Janssen et al., 1990) produced an overall definition of a tripartite structure (need, action, effect) in a three dimensional space (direction, place, time). To investigate if this structural definition still holds and can be found in a representative sample, that is whether or not people really have this definition in mind, we prefer an unobtrusive, indirect measurement. In a survey this can be done by maximising the openness of the questions, however, to the disadvantage that many people are likely to forget elements they would recognize immediately as important when directly asked by the investigator. An optimum between leading versus open-ended questioning is difficult to attain. In this case, we started off by first analysing the most general, introducing question:

‘what is praying to you?’. Thereafter, we took into account the five additional more leading questions (when do you pray, where, how, what is the need, what do you hope to achieve?). In this way it can be investigated, first, whether the definition of prayer previously discovered basically holds. Subsequently, the definition can be refined to describe the content of contemporary praying behaviour of the Dutch and to analyse how the elements of the definition are related.

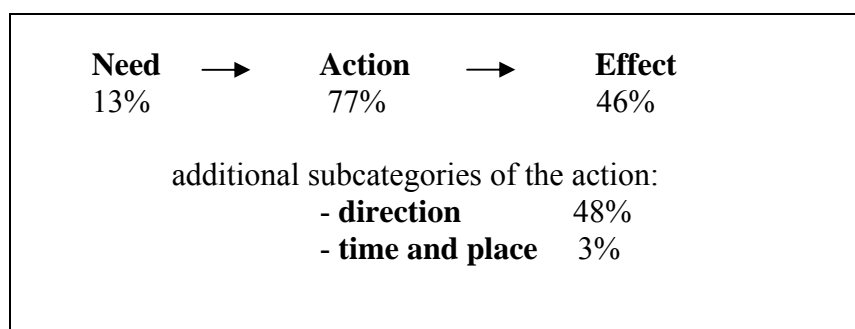


Figure 1. Structural definition of praying. Based on the analysis of the question: ‘What is prayer to you?’ n= 896.

The results for the general question, ‘what is praying to you?’, show that 77% of the respondents describe prayer as an act, such as thinking, talking, asking or reflecting; 46% mentions the effects of prayer; 48% a direction; 13% mentions a need and only 3% refers to time and place (see Figure 1). It appears that time and place are secondary in the definition of prayer, but also the frequency for the need category is rather low (13%).

How difficult it is to circumvent a leading nature, even in open-ended questions, may be derived from the frequent mention by our respondents of all kinds of activities (several verbs) that may be induced by the question, since the activity of ‘praying’ is explicitly mentioned. The same holds for the category effect; an action implicitly implies an effect. The frequent mention of a direction, mostly called God, however, is a truly unobtrusively obtained result. The answer is a spontaneous

one, not led by the question. Apparently, it is a central element in praying, even in a secular society like the Netherlands. It appears that action, direction and effect are the most important elements in the praying concept. The need is logically bound to the effect, but is, probably due to the fact that their complementary connection is implicit, mentioned less frequently when we ask for the meaning of prayer. Time and place are secondary. Thus, in present study, where primarily individual and not public prayer is studied, praying is essentially an individualised act, directed towards a goal in the presumed presence of another. Yet, a more complete understanding of praying may result when we take into account the more specific questions on elements of prayer.

3.3.2 The content of praying practices

The content analysis of the answers on the six open-ended questions about praying resulted in a scheme of structural and content elements, as presented in Table 1. By using the definition of praying presented before as a guideline, we could describe the answers of the subjects.

People need to pray, that is they are motivated to pray when they are confronted with such concrete problems as sickness (41%), death (35%), problems in relationships (8%), and examinations (4%). Less concrete situations, such as difficult moments (20%), problems (15%), and sadness (4%) were also mentioned. On the other hand, although less frequent, appear positive reasons to pray: to thank God (11%) or when someone is overwhelmed by the birth of children (5%).

A large part of the Dutch population defines the prayer as an act in traditionally religious terms, such as talking (42%), thanking (19%) or asking (26%), but a considerable amount of people express their prayers in rather abstract, cognitive terms, such as: thinking (26%), reflecting (14%) and meditating (8%).

Table 1. The content of praying: structural elements and the content categories (percentages between brackets) of the open-ended questions about prayer (n = 1008).

structural	content categories
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elements	
need n=389 (39)	sickness (41), death (35), at difficult moments (20), problems (15), to thank or happiness (11), for others (9), relational problems (8), birth (5), sadness (4), examinations (4),
action n=508 (50)	talking (42), asking (26), thinking (26), thanksgiving (19), reflection (14), contemplate (8)
<u>subcategory:</u> <u>method</u> n=246 (44)	hands joined (14), eyes closed (13), in silence (11), lying (9), fixed formula (8), sitting (7), kneeling (4)
effect n=485 (48)	inner rest (28), help (20), insight (14), power (13), support (13), turn out to be all right (7), pour out one's heart (5), thanksgiving (5), relationship/contact with god (5), happiness (5), good health (4), forgiveness (4), hear a prayer (4), remission (4), acceptance (4)
direction n=329 (33)	to God (63), in myself (29), something (12), higher power (11)
place n=485 (48)	at home (33), in bed (32), church (28), everywhere (21), before dinner (13), alone (8), countryside (4), at work (4), bicycle/car (4)
time n=501 (50)	evening/night (43), anytime (22), at diner (19), immediate cause (18), celebration (13), morning (10), fixed hours (4), by day (4), alone (3)

Note: The percentages of the structural elements are calculated in reference to the whole group (n=1008), i.e. 39% of the subjects mentioned a need on one or more questions. The percentages for the content categories are calculated in reference to the number of subjects, who mentioned the structural aspect. Because each subject could mention several aspects, the total number may exceed 100%.

As regards the effects of prayer, a sharp contrast with the need to pray can be ascertained. Even if the problems are rather concrete, such as sickness, people definitely do not pray for a concrete solution, provided by a God. The words inner rest (28%), power (14%), support (13%), insight (14%), and so on, indicate that the effects are mainly described in abstract, psychological terms. The more general category help (20%) contains mainly abstract formulations. A concrete effect, such as 'better health' is mentioned only by 4% of the people. Apparently, it is important to differentiate between needs and effects.

Regarding the direction of the prayers, Table 1 shows that of those people who mentioned a direction, a majority refer to God (63%), which

is to be considered an unobtrusive result because we did not ask the respondents to whom or what they pray. Most of the directional terms (God, myself (29%), something (12%), and higher power (11%)), were mentioned spontaneously on the question 'what is prayer to you?'. Although people have trouble to define a term like God and many only can say that He is someone or something (Hutsebaut & Verhoeven, 1995; Janssen, de Hart, & Gerardts, 1994), His position in the structure of the prayer as the direction of the prayer seems undisputed, even in a secularised context.

As regards place and time, contemporary prayers are said at traditional, holy places and moments (in church, at dinner, at celebrations) and at all kinds of ordinary places and times, in particular at home or at night in bed.

3.3.3 Varieties of prayer: dimensions and correlations

The above analysis resulted in 60 items of content categories (see Table 1). In order to distinguish types of prayer, a factor analysis (for details see Appendix I) was conducted. In the first step, the content categories with more or less the same meaning were combined, resulting in 37 items. A four-factorial solution was tested. In the next step, all cross-loading items were deleted from the solution due to multiplicity (for details see Appendix II). Although many items (15) were left out, the remaining items provide a clear and concise picture of the four varieties of prayer. The explained variance for each factor is satisfactory, resulting in a sum total explained variance of 47% (see Table 2).

Factor 1 represents *religious praying*. This factor contains items like God (.76), and relationship with God (.53). Other items of this factor are typically traditional prayer items, such as kneeling (.78), forgiveness (.75), and before dinner (.66).

Factor 2 represents *meditative praying*. This factor includes cognitive actions, such as insight (.68), meditation/reflection (.59), and in thought (.54). Other important items of this factor are rest (.60), and in myself

(.43). The items good health (-.60), and turn out to be alright (-.51). load both negative on this factor. As predicted, concrete goals are not aimed at in meditative prayer, effects like rest and insight are central.

Table 2. Four-factorial solution of 22 items, items with factor loadings $\geq .40$ (n=553).

	religious	meditative	psychological	petitionary	h2
1-kneeling	.78				.63
2-to God	.76				.63
3-forgiveness	.75				.61
4-before dinner	.66				.47
5-contact with God	.53				.34
6-insight		.68			.52
7-inner rest		.60			.42
8-good health		-.60			.41
9-considering/reflecting		.59			.58
10-in thought		.54			.37
11-turn out to be alright		-.51			.44
12-in myself		.43			.36
13-at difficult moments			.62		.60
14-sadness			.61		.43
15-something/high power			.56		.43
16-in bed/at night			.55		.40
17-in church			-.54		.42
18-pour out one's heart			.51		.40
19-asking				.84	.79
20-for others				.61	.59
21-thanksgiving				.52	.33
22-death				.41	.17
<i>explained variance</i>	16%	11%	10%	10%	47%
<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	.87	.86	.75	.79	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, on tetrachoric correlations.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Appendix 1 and 2 gives further details. Note: the omitted factor loadings are substantially lower than the loadings presented in table.

Factor 3 represents *psychological prayer*. It is characterised by pour out one's heart (.51) to a higher power or something (.56). It also contains the items sadness (.61), and at difficult moments (.62). The item church (-.54) loads negative on this factor, and the item in bed (.55) positive. This factor seems to point to a typically individualised prayer, said in bed, at moments of great distress, pointing to the centrality of the need.

Factor 4 represents *petitionary prayer*, which is characterised by a typical item of petition asking (.84). Other important items are thanksgiving (.52), death (.41), and for other people (.61).

The four factors are to some extent constructions. In reality, each prayer always combines several aspects of prayer. The inter-correlations between the individual sum scores for the four factors show a negative correlation between meditative and religious prayer ($r = -.15$, $p < .001$) and a positive correlation between religious and petitionary prayer ($r = .15$, $p < .001$). Thus, in reality there is a slight tendency, as found in previous research (Janssen et al., 2000), for religious and petitionary prayer to go together. In this combination, religious and petitionary prayers are traditional in nature: one is looking for help by submitting existential problems to God, at fixed places and moments (before dinner, in church). A second way of praying (meditative and psychological prayers) is rooted in the psyche of individualised mankind, contemplating life and searching in oneself for insight and rest. God is present as a transcending, intangible someone or something (Janssen et al., 1994).

3.3.4 Needs and effects of prayer: self and other references

The importance of the distinction between need and effect was shown before. In addition, this distinction appears to be important as regards the analysis of 'the social dimension' of prayer. A term coined by Schmied (1998) that refers to the person who benefits from the prayer (i.e., the expected effect of the prayer is intended for myself or for somebody else). An old wisdom says that religion uplifts man. According to this line of reasoning, praying may increase social and human values. In the early but still interesting psychological praying studies of Strong (1909) and Coe (1916), both inspired by the social Gospel movement (Wulff, 2001/02), this idea is central. Praying '*is then, a social relation which has as aim the attainment of a wider, less partial self - a more confident self, a self more strong to endure, a self of larger sympathies, a*

more truly ethical self, a more completely social self (Strong, 1909, p. 30). In the words of Coe (1916, p. 320), praying puts personal problems on a higher social level '*as something of ultimate worth*'. Do the prayers of our respondents reach to these lofty perspectives? To provide an answer to this question, a second content analysis of the categories needs and effects was conducted, now focusing on self references (I, me, my self, et cetera) and references to others (parents, relatives, friends, et cetera). For example, if a need is related to oneself ('I pray when I feel sad'), it is scored in the category *self*. If a need is related to somebody else ('I pray when my aunt is sick'), it is scored in the category *others*. The same procedure was applied for the effects. Subsequently, the content categories *needs* and *effects* are compared regarding self references (*self*) and references made to others (*others*) (Table 3).

As can be seen in Table 3, a sharp distinction appears between the references used in the need to pray and those used in the effect of prayer. The motives to pray (need) contain both problems related to the *self* (30%) and, even more although not significantly ($t = -2.2, p > 0.05$) problems related to *others* (37%). However, the categories self and others regarding the effects show significant differences: 61% of the subjects pray for themselves, and only 10% of the people pray for the benefits of other people ($t = 20.4, p < 0.00$).

Table 3. The percentage of people that relate to self or others concerning the categories need and effect (n= 553).

	need	effect	epsilon	t-test
self	30 %	61 %	-31	-11.8*
others	37 %	10 %	26	10.9*
epsilon	-7	51		
t-test	-2.2	20.4*		

* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

Hence, people are motivated to pray because of problems that menace both themselves and others, but in the effects the prayers are primarily self-focused. While Coe and Strong point to the socialising effect of

praying, putting individual needs in a social perspective, the present analysis results in the worrying finding that even social motives are individualised and reduced to their personal consequences.

In the next step, prayer practices can be separated into the four dimensions of praying, and correlating them with the categories of the social dimension of praying (see Table 4). It turns out that the petitionary prayer is often said because of the needs of others ($r = .51, p < .01$), while the effect of the prayer refers to the self ($r = .11, p < .05$). Both the religious and the psychological prayer seem to be based on the needs of the self (the correlation with religious prayer = $.17, p < .01$; the correlation with psychological prayer = $.34, p < .01$), whereas only in the psychological prayer this self-centred need effectuates the self related effects ($r = .16, p < .01$). For the meditative prayer two significant correlations appeared. First, with self-effect ($r = .33, p < .01$), and, second, a negative correlation with others-effect ($r = -.09, p < .05$). These results show again how important the self-centred effect is in the case of the meditative prayer.

Table 4. The correlations between prayer type and social dimension (n= 553).

	petitionary	religious	psychological	meditative
self need	.07	.17**	.34**	.01
others need	.51**	.00	-.03	.06
self effect	.11*	.03	.16**	.33**
others effect	.04	.05	.01	-.09*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.3.5 The quantitative results in a qualitative perspective

Content analyses resulted in quantitative scores that were analysed systematically in tables, by factor analysis and correlation analysis. By putting the quantitative results in the perspective of the praying structure, these results will show up in the qualitative perspective of the praying practices of the Dutch. Figure 2 shows the results.

The expectation that the structural elements need, action, effect, and direction constitute the central characteristics of the various types of prayer is confirmed in the case of the religious, the meditative and the psychological prayer. In the religious prayer the accent is clearly on the direction, the relationship with God. The effect and the action are derived thereof. Place and time have a ritual nature. In the meditative prayer self concentrated actions are central, but the effect, as a benefit for the self, is just as important. Action and effect are closely related, the action being beneficial in itself. The expectation that the effect is primarily cognitive (making up one's mind) is partially confirmed by the content category insight.

Varieties of praying		<i>Components of praying</i>				
		need	action	effect	direction	time and place social dimension
religious			kneeling	<u>forgiveness, contact with God</u>	God	before dinner self need
petitionary	death, for others		asking	<u>thanksgiving</u>		others need
meditative			meditation/ reflection, in thought	insight, rest	in myself	self effect
psychological	sadness, difficult moments			<u>pour out one's heart</u>	something/ higher power	in bed, at night self need

Figure 2. The results of the factor analysis and the correlation analysis in relation to the structure and varieties of praying.

Note: Praying elements which are underlined (contact with God, thanksgiving, and pour out one's heart) were mentioned as an effect, but are in fact activities and could therefore also be assigned to the action category.

The category rest can be interpreted in cognitive as well as emotional terms. In the psychological prayer the need is central, coming from negative experiences in the self. The effect (pour out one's heart) can, as expected, be characterised as emotional.

The total structure underlines the previously mentioned idea that the psychological prayer is a modernised version of the petitionary prayer as a cry for help. In the case of the petitionary prayer the centrality of the effect, as a concrete result, was not found. The people we studied hardly pray for concrete results, even in the case of petitionary prayer. The core element is the need: the prayer is said as a result of the problems of others people. The effect is only mentioned as an action (thanksgiving), presumably indicating a prayer of the second order: a prayer to thank God that He heard a previous prayer.

3.4 Conclusion and discussion

In this contribution we have shown that the prayer act, even in a highly secularised country like the Netherlands, can actually be described as a tripartite act, composed of a need, action and effect, in a three dimensional space of direction, time and place. The contents of these structural elements constitute four varieties of prayer: religious praying, petitionary praying, meditative praying and psychological praying. In the religious prayer the direction is central: it is a prayer to relate to God. In the petitionary prayer, asking and the need of others are the central elements, although the effect of the prayer is, as in most prayers, primarily self-centred. The meditative prayer lacks a clear need and is concentrated in the reflective capacities of the self. The psychological prayer is focused on personal problems that are emotionally processed at the end of the day, at night, in bed.

Three additional conclusions can be drawn. First, in most cases the effect of prayer is formulated in general, abstract and psychological terms. Concrete and material effects are hardly ever aimed at. In this respect, our data confirm previous studies, such as the early studies of Beck (1906), Morse and Allan (1912/13), and Pratt (1910/11, 1920). In Morse and Allan's study, 27% of the college students pray for '*definite*

and temporary ends' (p. 180), and 83% of Beck's respondents believe *'the results of prayer to be wholly subjective'* (p. 119). Pratt's study showed nearly the same results, and he concluded that *'appeals for spiritual blessings largely predominate, and that material blessings and particular ends play a relatively subordinate role'* (p. 321). In the present study, hardly anyone prayed with the intention of aiming at real effects. It seems that Pratt's conclusions are accentuated for the contemporary praying practices.

Secondly, the four types of prayer that we distinguished with open-ended questions are more or less comparable with the varieties found by other scholars (i.e. Poloma & Gallup, Hood et al., Laird et al., see introduction for an overview). Particularly, whereas it concerns the traditional prayer types; the religious prayer is similar to the ritual and liturgical prayers, and the petitionary prayer is widely common among all authors. The meditative and psychological prayers are less similar with other types of prayer. Although some scholars distinguished contemplative and reception prayers, the content is rather deviant from the meditative prayer we found. Thus, we may conclude that in a secular society such as the Netherlands, some varieties of prayer occur as in other, predominantly religious, societies, and others not.

A third finding relates to the individualisation of the effect of prayer. Many people pray when others are in trouble but most of them pray in the end for themselves, to endure the hardships of life. In previous times, according to Coe and Strong, individual needs were lifted up to be enclosed in shared concerns. In contemporary secular society, the opposite process seems to emerge. Praying serves to elevate the problems of the others, not so much for the benefit for the other, but rather for the prayers' own benefit. Several studies confirm that religion contributes to pro social behaviour: church members give both more money and more time to charitable enterprises than people who do not consider themselves to be members of congregations (e.g. Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995; Reitsma, J., Scheepers, P., &

Grotenhuis, M. te., in press). As a consequence of the process of secularisation, altruism could be a value in decline. Moreover, the modern 'quest' believer is typically not a volunteer for a charitable cause or an active member of human welfare organisations (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). Do these findings indicate that traditional religious values, such as compassion, tolerance and charity, devalue in an individualising and secularising society? And do the results of the present study fit to that hypothesis? In our view, such a conclusion seems excessive and another interpretation seems just as plausible. Most people do not ask for material effects, i.e. do not ask God to interfere directly. Real effects as intended in the numerous experimental studies on prayer (Koenig, 1999) are hardly aimed at. The Dutch respondents primarily ask for things they can in the end achieve themselves: rest, insight, strength. Further study should clear whether this attitude indeed indicates that egoism is the hallmark of secularised society. For the time being, people ask, at the utmost, God to help them to help themselves. No miracles are expected.

The content analyses on praying made clear that we can no longer rely on consensus based and taken for granted definitions of praying. However, our findings should be put into perspective. Open-ended questions can actually reveal the real concerns of people. That is their strength. Nevertheless, it has some disadvantages too. First, this methodology focuses on I-prayers primarily, and diverts from the congregational we-prayer. Apparently, open-ended questioning draws the attention to personal concerns and thus to individual praying. As a result, the person who prays tends to forget about the social context, which influences the answers given by the respondents. An illustration of this point is a study of praying among Dutch people visiting Lourdes, the famous place of pilgrimage in France. Bänziger (2001) found that many of them pray intercessory prayers on behalf of others. It seems clear that the social context (alone at home or visiting a place of pilgrimage with others) and the way of questioning (open-ended or

closed) co-define the range of answers people can give. Second, the reliability of content analysis of open-ended questions remains to some extent questionable. To handle this problem, each step in the present study was documented and, therefore, all decisions were constantly available during and after the whole process of analysing. All in all an optimal research design for the study of prayer has to alternate or to combine closed and open-ended questioning.

We like to emphasise that next to the classic, theistic understanding of religion, a spiritual, philosophical, meditative way of being religious can be discerned. Today's prayer is a complex combination of meditative, psychological, petitionary and religious aspects that exceeds the boundaries of common religious practices. By studying open-ended questions on praying practices in a secular society, we implemented David Wulff's plea to '*place religion in the broadest possible framework*' (2001/02. p. 255). In modern society where processes of secularisation and individualisation are prominent, the study of prayer should be put on the research agenda to understand the religion of modern mankind. Present study with the Netherlands as a case study offered an outstanding starting point, now we should continue with elaborated comparative research on praying.

Appendix I

Factor analyses were based on tetrachorical correlations because all variables are dichotomous. Our hypothesis expects four factors. The scree plot of the factor analyses shows a strong break between the fourth and fifth factor. On these empirical grounds, we decided that the factor analyses could be fixed on four factors.

Appendix II

The 60 content categories which are the ground for the factor analyses were reduced to 37 items in the first step, and in the second step to 22 items. The first step of this procedure was to combine categories with the same meaning into one category. This led to the following categories: 'before dinner' (containing before dinner and at dinner), contemplation/reflection (contemplation, and reflection), something/higher power (something and higher power), in bed/at night (in bed, and evening/night), in church (church, and celebration), thanksgiving (to thank (need), thanksgiving (as action), and thanksgiving (as effect)). This resulted in 37 items. In the second step (with the remaining 37 items), items that loaded (substantially) lower than .40, and higher than .40 on two factors were excluded. This procedure ended in 22 items that load only on one factor with factor loadings above .40.

Notes:

1. For more information Janssen (1990). See also: hyperlink [http://www.texyz.com/textable] where the current version can be downloaded and tested.

CHAPTER 4

PRAYING OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH IN A SECULARISED SOCIETY. EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS SOCIALISATION.⁴

This study focuses on non-churchgoers who engage in private praying, a group which might stand for individualised religiosity outside of institutionalised religion. Based on a national survey (SOCON, N = 1008), three groups could be identified: (1) churchgoers who pray (churchgoing prayers), (2) persons who pray but do not attend church services (unchurched prayers), and (3) people who do neither (non-religious group). Research has demonstrated that church attendance influences religious motivations, beliefs and experiences, and that religion influences people's level of mental health, helping behaviour, and prejudice (Batson 1993). With regard to these characteristics, the unchurched prayers emerged as generally having lower scores than the churchgoing prayers, but higher scores than the non-religious group. The hypothesis that the differences between these three groups can be explained by religious socialisation was confirmed for the traditional religious indices. There was no effect of socialisation on the contemporary or more individualised indices of religiosity.

4.1 Introduction

'The Netherlands constitutes a strategic case study in the debate on secularisation and emerging new types of religiosity' (Houtman & Mascini, 2002, p.456)

Research on contemporary Dutch religiosity shows an interesting paradox. On the one hand, an undeniable and thorough process of secularisation is going on (e.g. Dekker, de Hart, & Peters, 1997; te Grotenhuis & Scheepers, 2001). On the other hand, it appears that other forms of religious behaviour, such as New Age, New Religious Movements, and all kind of spiritual practices are flourishing (Aupers,

⁴ This chapter is a slightly adapted version of: Bänziger, S., Scheepers, P., & Janssen, J. Praying outside of the church in a secularised society. Effects of religious socialisation. Submitted to: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

2004; Becker, de Hart, & Mens, 1997; Houtman & Mascini, 2002; Janssen, 2002). It seems that, despite secularisation, typically individualised and non-institutionalised religiosity is practised widely.

Moreover, previous research has shown that a majority of the Dutch youth still practise praying (Janssen, de Hart, & den Draak, 1990; Janssen & Bänziger, 2003), an activity which is traditionally linked with the church. Whereas compared with the youth from sixteen countries, the Dutch youth come last where church membership and church attendance are concerned, they rank third (behind Italy and Ireland, the typically Catholic countries in Europe) in terms of praying frequency (Campiche, 1997). Comparing the same countries of the Campiche study with the more recent European Value Study (Halman, 2001), the same tendency can be found: 71% of the Dutch population prays, which is unusual in a country with a dominant secularised population. Halman et al. conclude that, despite the lowest participation in church attendance and church membership, the people in the Netherlands are rather religious; there are more '*believers than believers*' (Halman, Luijkx, & van Zundert, 2005, p.72).

Thus, religiosity in the Netherlands seems to be developing in two directions: first, as a fading tradition, and second, as an individualised practice. Praying is of central importance because it seems to be a more resilient religious phenomenon than church membership and church attendance (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). In the present study, we will address the attitudes and behaviours of people who practise praying outside of the institutionalised religions, as precursors of the upcoming individualised religiosity.

4.1.1 Questions

Our focus is on religious behaviour, with special reference to non-churchgoers who practise individualised praying. We compare those people with, on the one hand, people who attend regularly religious services and practise praying, and on the other hand, with people who

are not involved in any of these religious activities. In the following, we shall refer to these groups as (1) the *churchgoing prayers* (churchgoers who pray), (2) the *unchurched prayers* (persons who pray but do not attend church), and (3) the *non-religious group* (people who do neither)¹.

We will compare the unchurched prayers with the two reference groups on various indices. First, on indices of religiosity, such as religious motivations (intrinsic, extrinsic and quest orientation), religious experiences (mysticism), and religious beliefs (God images). Second, on the non-religious aspects: mental health, prejudice, and helping behaviour. These three topics are based on Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis (1993), who concluded that religion influences the level of these aspects.

Research has shown that religious socialisation is an influential factor in transmitting behaviours and attitudes (te Grotenhuis & Scheepers, 2001). Consequently, due to different levels of religious socialisation, we expect differences between these three groups. However, because almost nothing is known about the exceptional group of people who practise praying outside of the institutions, we do not know whether these unchurched prayers are more like the churchgoing prayers or more like the non-religious group with reference to the above-mentioned aspects. We expect, however, that religious socialisation accounts for the differences between the three groups.

Thus, we set out to find answers to the following research questions. First, to what extent do the unchurched prayers differ from the churchgoing prayers and non-religious group as regards the above-mentioned aspects of religious motivations, beliefs and experiences? Second, to what extent do the unchurched prayers differ from the churchgoing prayers and non-religious group as regards mental health, prejudice and helping behaviour? Finally, the most central question: which factors contribute to an explanation of the emerging differences, with a particular emphasis on religious socialisation.

4.1.2 Theory and hypotheses

Differences between people's levels of religiosity, and between attitudes and behaviours related to religiosity have often been explained by theories of socialisation. Socialisation refers to the process by which agents encourage individuals to accept beliefs and behaviours that are normative and accepted within that culture (Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). In the same way people learn their sex role or language, they internalise the religion and religious practices, such as praying, of socialising agents. So far, a considerable body of empirical results supports the socialisation approach (see Spilka et al., 2003; Paloutzian & Park, 2005). This approach may be fruitful to explain the differences between the three groups we distinguish.

There are many socialising agents, among which parents appear to be the most influential. Moreover, mothers have more influence on children's religion than fathers (Spilka et al., 2003). Two other determinants of religious socialisation are 'religious upbringing', which has often been regarded as an important factor in sustaining religiosity (Iannaccone, 1995), and 'religious heterogeneity' (i.e. the parents do not belong to the same denomination or one of the parents is a non-member). Religious heterogeneity is regarded as the most important factor of the secularisation process (Voas, 2003). Although it is clear that parents play an important role in the religious socialisation process, there are more socialising agents, such as family, peers and partners. During adolescence, peer groups in particular may also have a considerable effect on behaviour (Harris, 1995). As people grow older, partners may become more important than parents or peer groups. Many people like to discuss religious matters and share their thoughts and ideas with their partners. Finally, we expect that the duration of religious socialisation, i.e. how many years one is exposed to religious socialisation, for example during church services, may substantially influence the development of religious beliefs and behaviours. In the

next section we will propose hypotheses building on the socialisation approach.

4.1.3 Hypotheses regarding religiosity

To define religion so that all aspects are included is difficult or even impossible. Attempts to counter ensuing problems have led to the use of 'operational definitions', which refer to some tangible religious indicators, such as the widely used church attendance or church membership as indicators of traditional religion³. Many studies have shown that church attendance and church membership are related to various religious motivations and beliefs, such as intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation (e.g. Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993), as well as a theistic concept of God (e.g. Bader & Froese, 2005; Noffke & McFadden, 2001). Religious socialisation might be a possible explanation for these connections. Either religious upbringing of various socialising agents or exposure to particular beliefs which are preached in church services can account for the internalisation of religious beliefs. As regards these indices of religiosity, we expect that the three groups differ in terms of intrinsic/extrinsic orientation and the theistic view of God. The precise relation, however, is yet unclear; the unchurched prayers may bear more resemblance to the churchgoing prayers, or may bear more resemblance to the non-religious group, or may hold a position in between. Nevertheless, in accordance with the proposition that the level of religious socialisation varies among the three groups, we hypothesise that the differences between the three groups in terms of intrinsic/extrinsic orientation and theistic God image can be explained by religious socialisation (H1).

In a secularised society, however, church attendance and church membership may be inadequate indices of more individualised, non-institutionalised or contemporary forms of religiosity³. Recent studies have indeed found that there is no relation between church attendance and quest orientation, an immanent concept of God, and mysticism (te

Grotenhuis & Scheepers, 2001; Hutsebaut, 2001; Janssen, 2002; Janssen & Prins, 2000; van der Ven, 1998). People practising individualised religiosity outside of the religious institutions, such as the unchurched prayers, are not directly exposed to socialisation processes taking place during church services. Yet, they may be exposed to other socialising agents (such as parents, partners, peers) that may indirectly transmit socialising messages due to which they may opt for individualised religious behaviour, such as quest orientation, mysticism, and the belief in an immanent God. In this respect, we expect the beliefs in terms of quest orientation, mysticism and an immanent God image to be different in each group, although it is unknown whether the unchurched prayers are more likely to believe in these contemporary religious aspects than the churchgoing prayers, or whether they hold the same beliefs. We propose the hypothesis that religious socialisation accounts for the differences in terms of quest orientation, mysticism and an immanent view of God (H2).

4.1.4 Hypotheses regarding mental health, prejudice, and helping behaviour

Many studies have addressed the effects of religion on a wide range of subjects, ranging from everyday behaviours to various psychopathological dysfunctional behaviours. For our purpose, we will elaborate on Batson's study, mentioned above, since he found many studies which revealed that religious people have generally better mental health (e.g. Batson et al., 1993; Hacking & Sanders, 2003; Janssen, Bänziger, Dezutter, & Hutsebaut, 2003; Oomens, 2005), engage more in helping behaviour (e.g. Batson et al., 1993; Reitsma, Scheepers, & te Grotenhuis, in press), but are also more prejudiced (e.g. Batson et al., 1993; Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Hello 2002; van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, 2004).

Elaborating on the reasoning in the previous paragraph, we expect religious socialisation through either socialising agents or socialising

circumstances such as church services to account for the attitudes and behaviours regarding mental health, helping behaviour and prejudice. The churchgoing prayers, unchurched prayers and non-religious group may differ in terms of religious socialisation and thus develop different attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, we expect that the three groups will differ in these respects. As in the previous paragraph, this relationship is unclear. Either the unchurched prayers are more like the churchgoing prayers, or more like the non-religious group. Another possibility is that the unchurched prayers hold a position in between the two reference groups. Again, we hypothesise that religious socialisation accounts for the differences found regarding mental health (H3), prejudice (H4), and helping behaviour (H5).

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Participants and procedure

To answer our research questions and test our hypotheses, we used a large-scale cross-sectional data set collected in the year 2000 in a longitudinal research programme named 'Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands 2000' (SOCON, Eisinga et al., 2002). The aim of the survey was to investigate the developments in the Netherlands on a wide scope of subjects such as religious beliefs, church involvement, value systems, ethnocentrism, conservatism, personality traits and mental illness. It also provided information about the social backgrounds of the respondents, their partners and parents. The sample was composed by means of a two-stage random procedure. First, municipalities were randomly selected, including a number of so-called self-weighted cities. Second, a random sample of respondents in between 18 and 70 years of age was selected from the registers of these municipalities. A number of 2,896 potential respondents were contacted, whereof 1,008 agreed to cooperate, i.e. the response rate was 43.7%. This

sample turned out to be representative of the Dutch population regarding the national distribution of gender and marital status. We found, however, small deviations from the national age distributions, i.e. respondents younger than 29 were somewhat underrepresented. Approximately 40% of this sample considered themselves to belong to a religious denomination, which is in line with the longitudinal secularisation trend in the Netherlands (te Grotenhuis & Scheepers, 2001).

4.3 Measurements

4.3.1 Dependent variables

Measures of Religion

Religious Orientation was measured with 22 items of the *Age Universal I-E scale* (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983) and with 12 items of the *Quest Scale Revised* (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991). The extrinsic and intrinsic religious dimensions refer to the personal use of religion, either as a means to an end (Ext), or as an end in itself (Int). The quest dimension assesses the degree to which an individual's religion involves an open-ended inquiring about existential questions. All 34 items were randomly mixed and administered to the respondents with an answering scale of 1 (doesn't apply to me) to 5 (applies to me). A PCA and a scree test pointed to only two factors instead of the expected three. 18 items of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic dimension loaded above .50 on the first factor. Two items loaded lower than .40 and were eliminated. All items of the Quest orientation loaded above .45 on factor two. Explained variance was 54%. Subsequently, two indexes were constructed, a combination of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic orientation: the IE-18 (Alpha = .96, M = 2.31, SD = .09) and Q-12 (Alpha = .90, M = 2.35, SD = .76).

The modified version of the *Mysticism Scale* (Hood, 1975) contains 5 items of a 3-point Likert type (1 = no, never; 3 = yes, often), which tap the

degree to which a person experiences mysticism (e.g. *Have you ever had an experience in which time and place were non-existent?*) The Alpha coefficient for the index was .76. (M = 1.57, SD = .46).

The *NISSET scale of God Images* (van der Ven, 1998) contains 14 items that assess the perception of God. All items were measured on a scale of 1 (doesn't apply to me) to 5 (applies to me). Two subscales emerged from a PCA: (1) Theistic view of God, which includes 8 items, e.g. *There is a God who concerns himself with every individual personally*, and (2) Immanent view of God, which includes 6 items, e.g. *I believe in the existence of a Supreme Being*. Alpha coefficients, Means and Standard deviation for the two indexes were .97 and .85, 2.75 and 3.45 and 1.11 and .83, respectively.

Mental Health

Mental health was measured with the short *Mental Health Inventory* (MHI-5) (Oomens, 2005), which consists of five items in which people are asked if they experienced feelings of anxiety and depression during the last four weeks. All items were measured on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 6 (constantly), with responses reversely coded so that larger numbers indicate a greater mental health. Alpha coefficient for the index was .77. (M = 4.73, SD = .67).

Prejudice

Attitudes towards equal rights for homosexual couples includes four items that measure the degree to which people agree with four aspects of equal rights for homosexual people: equal rights to (1) acquire suitable housing, (2) to adopt children, (3) to inherit from each other, and (4) to get married. All items were measured on a scale of 1 (no objection at all) to 5 (strong objection). Higher scores on this index would be interpreted as more resistance towards equal rights for homosexuality. Alpha coefficient for the index was .85. (M = 2.01, SD = .98).

Negative attitude towards ethnic out groups was measured with 5 items of a 5-point Likert type (1 = don't agree at all, 5 = agree entirely),

e.g. Gypsies are never to be trusted. Higher scores on this index would be interpreted as more prejudices against ethnic outgroups. Alpha coefficient for the index was .83 ($M = 2.43$, $SD = .74$).

Helping behaviour

Participants answered three direct questions that assess the degree to which a person is involved in helping behaviour.

First, they were asked how much money they donate on average to charity per year. The responses were classified into 5 categories, from 1 (less than 26 guilders (about 12 euros)) , to 5 (more than 250 guilders (about 120 euros)). The mean score was 3.2, SD was 1.49.

To measure the degree of help provided to other people, respondents were asked 'To how many people did you provide help in the last six months?'. The responses were classified into 4 categories, from 1 (less than 6 persons) to 4 (16 or more persons). The mean score was 1.68, SD was .91.

The third question assessed how much time the respondent spent on average on unpaid voluntary work per month. The responses were classified into 4 categories, from 1 (no unpaid voluntary work) to 4 (17 hours or more). The mean score was 1.62, SD was .93.

4.3.2 Independent measures

Typology

The key typology was measured with church attendance and prayer frequency. Church attendance was measured by a direct question on whether the respondent attended services of a church or religious community. The respondent was presented four answering categories: 1 (hardly ever/never), 2 (once or twice a year), 3 (once a month), and 4 (about once a week). We constructed a dichotomy with score 1 if the respondent never attended church services or only once a year (79.5%), and score 2 for the more regularly church visitors (20.5%). The answer category 'once a year' was included in the 'no' category because it refers

nearly always to funerals or marriages, and not to religious activity as such. To measure prayer frequency, respondents were asked if they ever prayed. The four answering categories were 1 (never), 2 (sometimes), 3 (regularly), and 4 (often). This variable was also dichotomized; respondents were given score 1 when they never prayed (38.2%), and score 2 when they pray sometimes, regularly, or often (61.8%). Respondents who did not answer the question were omitted from further analyses.

Table 1. Typology based on church attendance and praying frequency. Percentage and frequency (in brackets). N = 895.

<i>typology</i>	praying		
church attendance	no	yes	total
no	38.0 (340)	41.3 (369)	79.2 (709)
yes	0.2 (2)	20.7 (184)	20.8 (186)
total	38.2 (342)	61.8 (553)	895

Based on this information a typology was constructed comprising four categories: (1) persons who regularly attend church services and who pray (N = 184), (2) the unchurched prayers: people who do not attend church services, but who pray (N = 369), (3) people who attend church services but do not pray (N = 2), and (4) people who do neither (N = 340) (Table 1). The two people who attended church services but did not pray, were omitted from the analyses. This procedure thus resulted in three groups: the churchgoing prayers, the unchurched prayers, and the non-religious group.

Socialisation

Eight variables were used to assess diverse facets of the socialisation process.

First, two questions were administered to tap the *church membership of the parents*. Respondents were asked 'Does you mother/father consider herself/himself a member of a Christian Church or religious community?' The respondents identified 70.3% of the mothers and 62.7% of the fathers as members of a Christian church. The same question was asked to tap the *church membership of the partner*. 42.6 % of the partners were considered to be members of a Christian church, 57.4% were not identified as church members. The number of *religious peers* was measured by a direct single question on how many of the respondents' best friends consider themselves members of a church. The four answering categories were 1 (none), 2 (some), 3 (most) and 4 (all). The mean score was 2.00, SD was .80. The number of *religious family members* was measured in the same way, only the questions now referred to the respondents' family instead of their best friends. The mean score here was 2.39, SD was .92. *Religious upbringing* was measured by a single question: whether (67.7%) or not (32.3%) respondents were raised religiously. Furthermore, a dichotomy was constructed to measure the degree of *homogeneity versus heterogeneity*, based on whether father and mother were members of a Christian church, and if so, which Christian church. When both parents were members of the same Christian church, this would be interpreted as homogeneous (20%). When both parents were members of a different church, or one of the parents was a member of a church and the other was not, this would be interpreted as heterogeneous (80%). Finally, the *duration of religious socialisation (RS)* was measured by a constructed scale of several items, including the age of the person, whether the person was a church member or not, or the age at which the person left the church. The responses were classified into four categories, from 1 (zero years of religious socialisation) to 4 (51-70 years of RS). The mean score was 2.24, SD was 1.12.

Background characteristics

Other studies found that background and demographic factors significantly influence religion and religious attitudes. Therefore, we added gender, age, education and level of urbanisation as control variables. As to *gender* 49.8 percent of our respondents were male and 50.2 were female. *Age* was measured by the numbers of years ($M = 43.6$, $\min = 18$, $\max = 70$). As to the level of *education*, we used a division into seven categories for the highest level of education completed: (1) no education completed after primary education, to (7) completion of a university degree. Finally, the *level of urbanisation* varies between (1) very strong urbanisation (2,500 addresses or more per square kilometre) to (5) no urbanisation (less than 500 addresses per square kilometre). These codes refer to the measure of address density as established by Statistics Netherlands.

4.3.3 Analyses

Our data analytic strategy consisted of three steps. First, we provided means, z-scores and delta z-scores (i.e. analogous to the mathematical delta) to demonstrate differences between the three groups on the dependent variables (in the upper part of the tables). Second (in the lower part of the tables), we applied multiple regression analyses (three-step model) to evaluate the effects of socialisation variables (in model 2), controlled for socio-demographic variables (in model 1). Finally, in the third model of the regression analysis, we included the dummified variables of the typology. This was done with a dual aim. First, because these parameters are comparable with the delta z-scores, to examine the reduction of the differences between the three groups by the socialisation and control variables, and second, to compare the adjusted R^2 change of socialisation variables and typology to examine the impact of both on the dependent variables. The hypotheses state that socialisation accounts for the found differences between the three groups. In that case the delta z-score should be reduced to zero or non-significance in model 3 (i.e. the

parameters of the typology should be non-significant in model 3), and the R^2 change of typology should be zero or non-significant.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Traditional and contemporary religiosity

Table 2 provides the average scores (mean, z-scores, and delta z-scores) of the three groups on the dependent variables Intrinsic/Extrinsic orientation (IE), Quest orientation (Q), and Mysticism.

The unchurched prayers are significantly different from the churchgoing prayers and the non-religious group, in terms of intrinsic/extrinsic orientation; they are less IE oriented than the churchgoers, but more than the non-religious. Addressing the indices of quest and mysticism, we found that the unchurched prayers are significantly more likely to show a higher degree of quest orientation and mysticism than the non-religious group, but compared to the churchgoing prayers, they do not report significant different attitudes. With regard to the images of God (Table 3), we found that the unchurched prayers differ significantly from the churchgoing prayers and the non-religious group in terms of a belief based on a theistic image of God, as well as an immanent image of God. However, the mean scores show that the unchurched prayers believe more in an immanent God than both other groups. As regards a theistic image of God, they hold a position in between the other two groups.

Overall, these findings show that, with regard to the traditional measures of religiosity (i.e. IE orientation, theistic God image) the unchurched prayers are less traditional religious than the churchgoers, but more so than the non-religious group. However, with regard to the contemporary measures of religiosity (i.e. quest, mysticism), the unchurched prayers bear more resemblance to the churchgoing prayers

than the non-religious group (except with regard to the immanent view of God).

Table 2. Mean score, Z-score, delta Z-score, and multivariate regression analyses (three models) on IE and Q orientation and mysticism. N in brackets.

	Intrinsic/extrinsic (258)			Quest (262)			Mysticism (452)		
Descriptives^a									
Typology	Mean	Z-sc.	Δ Z	Mean	Z-sc.	Δ Z	Mean	Z-sc.	Δ Z
churchgoing prayers	3.34	1.16*	.93*	2.71	.48	.04	1.57	.01	-.08
unchurched prayers (ref.)	2.51	.22	---	2.69	.44	---	1.61	.09	---
non-religious group	1.68	-.71*	-.93*	1.93	-.55*	-.99*	1.43	-.31*	-.39*
Three models of regression analysis^b	1	model 2	3	1	model 2	3	1	model 2	3
Typology									
churchgoing prayers			.35**			---			---
unchurched prayers (ref.)			---			---			---
non-religious group			-.34**			-.46**			-.17**
<i>Socialisation variables</i>									
religion mother		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion father		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion family		---	---		---	---		---	---
religious upbringing		---	---		---	---		---	---
religious homogeneity		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion peers		.23**	.11*		---	---		---	---
religion partner		.16**	---		---	---		---	---
duration rel. socialisation		.39**	---		.36**	---		---	---
<i>Control variables</i>									
sex	---	---	---	---	---	---	.13**	.13**	.12*
age	.16**	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
education	-.15**	---	---	---	---	---	.10*	.10*	.10*
urbanisation	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
adjusted R ²	.05	.41	.58	.00	.12	.26	.02	.02	.04
R ² change		.36	.16		.12	.14		.00	.02

a: cell entries are absolute mean, z-scores and differences between z-scores with unchurched prayers as reference group (comparable with standardised betas of the regression analysis)

* significant difference compared to reference category (unchurched prayers), $p < .05$

b: cell entries are significant standardised coefficients

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

To answer our next question, on decisive determinants of the found differences, regression analyses were performed on the dependent variables. The lower part of Table 2 shows the significant standardised

regression coefficients for the variables Intrinsic/extrinsic orientation (IE), Quest orientation (Q) and Mysticism. As for IE, model 1 shows that age and education have a significant effect on the IE orientation, i.e. elderly people and the less educated people are more in IE orientation than younger and educated people. After adding socialisation variables in model 2, there were no effects of age and education left. We saw, however, a significant effect of the religion of peers, partners and the duration of religious socialisation. Nevertheless, in model 3, most of the effects of socialisation decreased, except for a small effect of the religion of peers. In the third analytical step, we compared the delta z-scores with the standardised beta's of the typology and took the R^2 change into account. Comparing the difference scores, we see that the initial differences are substantially reduced; from .93 to .35 for the churchgoing prayers, and from -.93 to -.34 for the non-religious group. Socialisation accounts for 36% of the explained variance, whereas the typology accounts for 16% of the additional variance. These results imply that, although socialisation variables cannot explain all variance of IE, the differences between the three groups are mainly explained by religious socialisation.

As for Quest orientation, we saw no significant effect of the socio-demographic variables in any of the three models. With regard to the socialisation variables, the duration of religious socialisation was significant in model 2. However, this effect decreased to non-significance in model 3. The only significant effect was found in the non-religious group, which implies that those who are not involved in any religious behaviour have a lower score on quest orientation than the churchgoing and unchurched prayers. An initial difference in mean score of -.99 between the unchurched prayers and the non-religious group decreased to -.46 due to socialisation. The R^2 change of socialisation and typology were more or less the same; 12% and 14% respectively, suggesting that other factors besides socialisation account for the variance of the quest orientation.

The parameters of mysticism in Table 2 show that the only significant effects are those of the demographic variables sex and education, and the non-religious group, which implies that the better educated and women report more mystical experiences, irrespective of whether or not they attend church or practise praying only in private.

Table 3. Mean score, Z-score, delta Z-score, and multivariate regression analyses (three models) on two items of concept of God. N in brackets.

Descriptives^a Typology	Theistic view of God (403)			Immanent view of God (396)		
	Mean	Z-sc.	ΔZ	Mean	Z-sc.	ΔZ
churchgoing prayers	3.78	.925*	.61*	3.47	.023*	-.24*
unchurched prayers (ref.)	3.10	.317		3.67	.262	
non-religious group	1.20	-.679*	-.99*	3.06	-.471*	-.73*

Three models of regression analysis^b	model			model		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Typology						
churchgoing prayers			.22**			-.12*
unchurched prayers (ref.)			---			---
non-religious group			-.40**			-.31**
<i>Socialisation variables</i>						
religion mother		---	---		---	---
religion father		---	---		---	---
religion family		.19**	.09*		---	---
religious upbringing		---	---		---	---
religious homogeneity		---	---		---	---
religion peers		---	---		---	---
religion partner		.19**	---		---	---
duration rel. socialisation		.29**	---		.14**	---
<i>Control variables</i>						
sex	---	---	---	.13**	.14**	.10*
age	---	---	---	---	---	---
education	-.28**	-.15**	-.15**	---	---	---
urbanisation	---	---	---	---	---	---
adjusted R ²	.06	.33	.49	.01	.03	.10
R ² change		.27	.16		.02	.07

a: cell entries are absolute mean, z-scores and differences between z-scores with unchurched prayers as reference group (comparable with standardised beta of regression analysis)

* significant difference compared to reference category (unchurched prayers), $p < .05$

b: cell entries are the significant standardised coefficients

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

The delta-z for the non-religious group decreased from -.39 to -.17, due to the control variables. Religious socialisation, with a R^2 change of zero was not an influential factor for mysticism. Taking into account the explained variance of 4% for the whole model, we must conclude that other unknown factors are responsible for the variances of mystical experiences.

As to the theistic view of God (Table 3), we see the same tendency as with the IE orientation. In the first model, education was a significant predictor, i.e. compared to the more educated people, the less educated people believe more in a theistic God. In the second model, however, the influence of education decreased, and duration of religious socialisation, religiosity of the family, and partners appear to be significant predictors. Nevertheless, in model 3 the effects of most socialisation variables decreased and turned non-significant, except a small effect of the religion of the family. Besides education, the typology appears to be the most significant predictor for a theistic view of God in model 3. It implies that people with a low level of education and churchgoers believe more in a theistic God than the higher educated, the unchurched prayers and the non-religious group. Furthermore, we see that the delta z-scores show a substantial decrease from .61 to .22 for the churchgoers, and from -.99 to -.40 for the non-religious, predominantly caused by the socialisation variables. The explained variance of this model is 49%; socialisation accounts for an additional 27%, whereas typology accounts for an additional 16%.

With regard to the immanent view of God, we see another pattern. The variable sex has in all three models a small, but significant influence, i.e., women believe more in an immanent God than men. In model 2, only the duration of religious socialisation appears to be a significant parameter. Once the typology is included in model 3, the parameters show that the unchurched prayers contribute as the most significant predictor of a immanent view of God. Although the delta z-scores were reduced to less than a half, caused by control and socialisation variables,

the R^2 change is not significant. With regard to the adjusted R^2 values, the impact of the socio-demographic and socialisation variables are rather small, whereas typology explains most of the - still rather low - variance.

To summarise, we formulated two hypotheses about the explanatory effects of the socialisation variables. Regarding the traditional measures of religiosity (IE and Theistic God image), we see that socialisation cannot completely account for the differences between the three groups. Nonetheless, the parameters of the typology are substantially reduced compared to the delta z-scores. Including socialisation variables, next to the control variables, increased the R^2 change twice as much, as compared to including the typology next to socialisation and control variables. Thus, hypothesis 1 can be confirmed. With regard to the contemporary measures of religiosity (Quest, Mysticism, Immanent God image) another pattern emerges. Socialisation as well as control variables do not account for a substantial contribution of the differences. Although the initial differences between the three groups are substantially reduced, the findings for all three variables indicate that the R^2 change of the typology is larger than the R^2 change of the socio-demographic and socialisation variables. Hypothesis 2 therefore needs to be rejected.

4.4.2 Mental health

Table 4 displays the differences (mean, z-scores and delta z-scores) of the degree of mental health for the churchgoing prayers, unchurched prayers and the non-religious group. As regards the degree of mental health, it emerges that the non-religious group seems to associate with the highest level of mental health, although the average scores of the unchurched prayers and churchgoing prayers are only a little smaller than the non-religious.

The regression analysis shows that three of the four demographic parameters (i.e. sex, age and education) reach significance in all three

models. Furthermore, the findings show that the religion of the mother is a significant predictor of mental health in model 2. Although in model 3 the non-religious group also becomes significant, the control variables and the religion of the mother remain the parameters with the most predictive power for mental health. This model explains 9% of the variance, whereof 6% is explained by the control variables, whereas socialisation accounts only for an additional 2%. The difference between the delta-z and the standardised beta of the non-religious group is mainly caused by the control variables. Hypothesis 3, which stated that socialisation accounts for the found differences, therefore needs to be rejected.

4.4.3 Prejudice

In table 4, we also compare also the mean scores on two indices of prejudice. A different pattern emerges for the two indices. Regarding 'equal rights of homosexual couples', the churchgoing prayers show more resistance than the unchurched and the non-religious group. The unchurched prayers bear in this respect more resemblance to the non-religious. However, regarding 'resistance to ethnic outgroups', we found that only the non-religious group report most favourable attitudes towards ethnic outgroups. In this respect the unchurched prayers are more like the churchgoing prayers, both holding more prejudiced attitudes towards ethnic outgroups.

After regression analyses on 'equal rights of homosexual couples', the findings of model 1 demonstrate that the socio-demographic parameters largely account for the degree of resistance towards these rights. In model 2, three socialisation parameters (i.e. religion of family, peers and partners), emerge as significant predictors.

In model 3, however, most of the socialisation parameters turn non-significant, whereas, besides the control variables, the churchgoing prayers emerge as a significant parameter. Thus, particularly women, the elderly, the lower educated and churchgoers show more resistance to

equal rights for homosexual couples. As we focused on the explained variance, the R^2 value increased by only 3% due to the churchgoing prayers, whereas the demographic and socialisation variables account for 13% and an additional 12% respectively (in models 1 and 2). Furthermore, we see that the delta z-score of the churchgoers drops substantially from .76 to .19, also due to the socio-demographic and socialisation variables.

Table 4. Mean score, Z-score, delta Z-score, and multivariate regression analyses (three models) on mental health and two items of prejudice. N in brackets.

	Mental health (466)			Homosexuality (459)			Ethnic out groups (338)		
Descriptives^a									
Typology	Mean	Z-sc.	ΔZ	Mean	Z-sc.	ΔZ	Mean	Z-sc.	ΔZ
churchgoing prayers	4.87	.201	.16	2.78	.852*	.76*	2.63	.273	.05
unchurched prayers (ref.)	4.76	.038		2.09	.091	---	2.60	.224	---
non-religious group	4.91	.264*	.23*	1.80	-.234	-.33	2.22	-.282*	-.51*
<hr/>									
Three models of regression analysis^b	1	model 3		1	model 3		1	model 3	
Typology									
churchgoing prayers			---			.19**			---
unchurched prayers (ref.)			---			---			---
non-religious group			.11*			---			-.18**
<i>Socialisation variables</i>									
religion mother		.13**	.15**		---	---		---	---
religion father		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion family		---	---		.11*	---		.17**	.12*
religious upbringing		---	---		---	---		---	---
religious homogeneity		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion peers		---	---		.13**	---		---	---
religion partner		---	---		.23**	.15**		---	---
duration rel. socialisation		---	---		---	---		---	---
<i>Control variables</i>									
sex	-.18**	-.18**	-.17**	-.16**	-.12**	-.13**	---	---	---
age	.15**	.14**	.14**	.16**	.09*	.09*	.23**	.24**	.23**
education	.10*	.10*	.10*	-.21**	-.17**	-.18**	-.31**	-.29**	-.29**
urbanisation	---	---	---	.12**	---	---	---	---	---
adjusted R^2	.06	.08	.09	.13	.25	.28	.16	.18	.20
R^2 change		.02	.01		.12	.03		.02	.02

a: cell entries are absolute mean, z-scores and differences between z-scores with unchurched prayers as reference group (comparable with standardised betas of regression analysis)

* significant difference compared to reference category (unchurched prayers), $p < .05$

b: cell entries are the significant standardised coefficients

$p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Regarding 'resistance towards ethnic outgroups', we see that education is the strongest predictor of the degree of prejudice against outgroups. The more educated, the less prejudiced the person is (this also holds true for equal rights for homosexual couples). In addition, the age of people and whether their family is religious also affect the attitude towards ethnic outgroups. So far, these results are more or less similar to the previous determinant of prejudice. However, taking the R^2 change into account, the socialisation variables in this model add only 2% to the explained variance, contrary to the 16% which socio-demographics accounts for resistance to homosexual couples. Although the initial differences between the unchurched prayers and non-religious group decreased from -.51 to -.18, this is caused by age and education.

Overall, we can conclude that the findings with regard to prejudice are rather ambiguous. The R^2 change of the socialisation variables as regards 'equal rights of homosexual couples' is approximately the same as the socio-demographic variables (12 and 13% respectively), but is only 2% (compared to the 16% of the socio-demographic variables) regarding 'resistance to ethnic outgroups'. Religious socialisation apparently influences the attitudes towards homosexuality, but not so much the attitudes towards ethnic outgroups. What is nonetheless clear is that the socio-demographic variables have the most predictive power for both measures of prejudice. Hypothesis 4 should therefore be rejected.

4.4.4 Helping behaviour

Table 5 shows the differences between the three groups on three items of helping behaviour. Comparing the mean scores, we see that the churchgoing prayers donate more money to charity, and are more engaged in voluntary work than the unchurched prayers and the non-religious group. The churchgoing prayers also spend somewhat more time on helping other people, although the differences are not statistically significant. So, with respect to helping behaviour, we can

conclude that the unchurched prayers bear more resemblance to the non-religious group than to the churchgoing prayers.

Furthermore, we found predominantly demographic characteristics affecting helping behaviour. However, the socio-demographic parameters do not all affect the three measures of helping behaviour equally.

Table 5. Mean score, Z-score, delta Z-score, and multivariate regression analyses (three models) on three items of helping behaviour. N in brackets.

	Money to charity (423)			Persons helped (459)			Voluntarily work (472)		
Descriptives ^a									
<i>Typology</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Z-sc.</i>	<i>Δ Z</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Z-sc.</i>	<i>Δ Z</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Z-sc.</i>	<i>Δ Z</i>
churchgoing prayers	4.11	.612*	.53*	1.72	.044	.07	2.11	.529*	.54*
unchurched prayers (ref.)	3.32	.079	---	1.65	-.029	---	1.61	-.010	---
non-religious group	3.39	.128	.05	1.60	-.090	-.06	1.59	-.029	-.02
<hr/>									
Three models of regression analysis ^b	1	<i>model</i>		1	<i>model</i>		1	<i>model</i>	
		2	3		2	3		2	3
<i>Typology</i>									
churchgoing prayers			.24*			---			.20*
unchurched prayers (ref.)			---			---			---
non-religious group			---			---			---
<i>Socialisation variables</i>									
religion mother		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion father		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion family		---	---		---	---		-.15*	-.18*
religious upbringing		---	---		---	---		---	---
religious homogeneity		---	---		---	---		---	---
religion peers		---	---		---	---		.11*	---
religion partner		---	---		---	---		.16*	---
duration rel. socialisation		.16*	---		---	---		---	---
<i>Control variables</i>									
sex	---	---	---	-.14*	-.14*	-.14*	---	---	---
age	.25*	.18*	.20*	-.13*	-.14*	-.14*	.17*	.11*	.10*
education	.20*	.21*	.23*	---	---	---	---	---	---
urbanisation	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
adjusted R ²	.07	.09	.13	.02	.02	.02	.03	.06	.09
R ² change		.02	.04		.00	.00		.03	.03

a: cell entries are absolute mean, z-scores and differences between z-scores with unchurched prayers as reference group (comparable with standardised betas of regression analysis)

* significant difference compared to reference category (unchurched prayers), $p < .05$

b: cell entries are the significant standardised coefficients

* $p < .01$

The dependent variable *helping other persons* deviates fundamentally from the other two; younger persons and women seem to be more engaged in helping other people than elderly persons. The older people, on the contrary, are more engaged in voluntary work and donate more money to charity. More educated persons also donate more money to charity, probably due to a larger financial income than the less educated persons.

After adding socialisation variables in model 2, it appeared that the duration of religious socialisation influences how much money people donate to charity, but the duration does not affect the other two items of helping behaviour. In addition, the religion of the peers and partner affects how much time someone spends on voluntary work, but these aspects do not influence the other measures. The reason for a negative relation with the religion of the family on voluntary work is yet unclear. Finally, including the typology in model 3, we see that people who attend church donate more money to charity and do more voluntary work than the unchurched prayers and non-religious persons. With regard to helping other people, there was no significant influence of the churchgoing prayers. Apparently, donating money and doing voluntary work are altruistic behaviours which are actively supported by church, whereas helping other people is not.

Finally, the low adjusted R^2 shows that other factors that have not been accounted for have a far greater influence. Also the R^2 change of the socialisation variables (2%, 0% and 3%, respectively) cannot account for a substantial reduction of the initial differences in mean scores. Thus, hypothesis 5, which stated that socialisation would account for the found differences, needs to be rejected.

4.5 Conclusion and Discussion

In the Netherlands, there is not only a growing number of apostates and non-religious people, but also a substantial group of people who practise religiosity such as praying in the private domain. Where in the past researchers focused mainly on those who practise traditional religious activities, such as church attendance, versus those who are not religiously active at all, we focus on a third party: those who practise praying without attending church services.

In this article we set out to describe and explain the differences between three groups; the unchurched prayers, the churchgoing prayers and the non-religious group. We elaborated on the socialisation approach, assuming that due to different levels of socialisation these three groups vary in a set of religious and non-religious attitudes and behaviours. First, we set out how each group differs from the others, and our second aim was to investigate which factors contribute to the variance of the dependent variables. Next, we tested the hypotheses that the differences can be explained by religious socialisation.

With regard to what we called traditional religious indices (IE orientation, theistic God image), the unchurched prayers differ significantly from both the churchgoing prayers and the non-religious group; they are not as traditionally religious as the churchgoers, but are significantly more so than the non-religious. According to the hypothesis, these differences are indeed predominantly caused by religious socialisation, in particular by the duration of religious socialisation. Thus, we may conclude that, with respect to the traditional religious indices, religious socialisation is an important explanatory factor.

As regards the indices of what we called contemporary religiosity (quest orientation, mysticism, immanent God image), the unchurched prayers believe more in these aspects than the other groups, although the differences with the churchgoers are not significant regarding quest

orientation and mysticism. Apparently, the Dutch churchgoers are rather open to these religious aspects, which is in line with the fact that Dutch believers are relatively more progressive in their religious opinions compared to other countries (e.g. Halman et al., 2005). Nonetheless, the unchurched prayers believe definitely more in an immanent God than the churchgoers. Contrary to our hypothesis, the found differences are not based on religious socialisation processes. Apparently other factors account for the differences of these typically individualised aspects.

As regards mental health, we found no large differences between the three groups; all the people - the non-religious group in the lead - have a rather high score on mental health. Thus, our results do not corroborate the general idea that churchgoers are socially supported by other church members and therefore enjoy better mental health. Contrary to the hypothesis that religious socialisation accounts for the differences, it seems that only socio-demographic factors are of any importance.

Conclusions about the prejudice indices are more difficult to draw. It is quit clear that the churchgoers are more prejudiced; both in their resistance to the equal rights of homosexual couples, as in their attitudes to ethnic outgroups. Their attitudes towards homosexual couples could be the result of the traditional doctrine of the Christian church, which holds a rather negative attitude towards homosexuality. In addition, religious socialisation does account significantly as regards the attitudes towards homosexuality, whereas it has no influence on the attitudes towards ethnic outgroups. Yet, the reason why the unchurched prayers hold an ambiguous position, i.e. more prejudiced towards homosexuality but less prejudiced to ethnic out groups, is unclear. Although religious socialisation accounts for the attitude of homosexuality, the socio-demographic factors predominantly affect the results of both indices.

Finally, where helping behaviour is concerned, we see that the unchurched prayers are more like the non-religious group, although

only where this involves help connected to and supported by religious institutions, such as donating money to charity and doing voluntary work. However, the conclusion that traditionally religious people are in general more altruistic than other people cannot be drawn. Our results show that this holds only for the activities connected with institutions. Where helping other people is concerned, an activity done in private, the churchgoers did not differ from the unchurched prayers and non-religious (see also: Reitsma et al., in press). As regards the hypothesis, we can conclude that socialisation is not a factor of significant influence, and although socio-demographic variables and the typology are more influential than socialisation, their influence is also not very substantial.

Before drawing any final conclusions, we would like to mention two noteworthy findings. First, despite the general emphasis on parents as primary socialising agents, it appeared that the mother and father play no crucial role as socialising agents, at least not in the Netherlands. Neither the homogeneity of the parents, nor religious upbringing caused a significant effect. Instead, 'duration of religious socialisation', and the religion of the family, peers, and partners accounted for a substantial contribution. This evidence might support Harris's idea that religious socialisation depends more on group socialisation than on primary agents (Harris, 1995).

The second important finding is that contrary to the results of Batson's review study, we found no substantial effect of religiosity on mental health and helping behaviour. Although churchgoers are in general more engaged in helping behaviour than other people, an explained variance of less than 10% might be considered rather minimal. Interestingly, the same holds for mysticism; socio-demographic, socialisation and our typology together can only explain 4% of the variance of mysticism. This means that other unknown factors might determine more substantially a person's mental health, altruistic behaviour and mystical experiences.

Can we draw some general conclusions about our hypotheses? Yes, the results suggest that with regard to traditional religious aspects, such as the IE orientation, theistic view of God as well as the attitudes towards homosexuality, the impact of the socialisation is substantially greater than the impact of the socio-demographic or typology variables. Yet, for all other indices, we found no dominant influence of socialisation. Although the initial differences between the three groups decreased, none of them reduced completely to zero. In some cases the socio-demographic variables are rather influential, but overall, it were the categories of the typology, which remain the most significant predictors of the models tested.

In the end, this means that neither socio-demographic nor religious socialisation are the factors which explain all the differences between these three groups, and thus other aspects might play a role. An alternative hypothesis might involve processes related to individualisation and privatisation. According to Luckmann and others, modern-day religion has undergone a shift from the public to the private sphere. Consequently, the determinants that shape religion are more focused on private experiences, while the process of creating meaning has become a matter of personal choice (Luckmann, 1990). Moreover, the individualisation of religion may reinforce or even cause the changing attitudes and behaviours regarding religiosity (e.g. Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Luckmann, 1967, 1990; Felling, Peters, & Scheepers, 2000).

Undeniably, this process is taking place in the Netherlands. A considerable amount of research points to this. On one hand, secularisation is still growing, while on the other hand, there is much emphasis on religious experiences in the private domain (e.g. Aupers, 2004; Houtman & Mascini, 2002; Janssen, 1998, 2002). The individualisation of religion is not only becoming more and more a feature of contemporary religiosity, it is, in fact, turning out to be the dominant expression of religiosity in modern Dutch society (Pärna,

2006). Still, the reason why modern forms of religion or spirituality survive is not clear yet.

As we saw in this study, it is clear that private praying is one of those aspects of contemporary religious life that has not disappeared, not even in the secularised Netherlands. It seems to be a more robust religious phenomenon than church membership and church attendance (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). Research on praying is and will be important, as praying outside of the institutions might be a precursor of new religious or spiritual developments in Western secularised societies.

Notes:

1. The terminology we use consists strictly of 'working definitions'. Neither do we want to suggest that churchgoing prayers only pray in church, nor that the non-religious group is not religious at all. Particularly people of other denominations than the Christian, for example Buddhist, are surely religious, but do not attend Christian church services and their forms of meditation or other kinds of worship may not be interpreted as praying. However, in the sample used, only 23 people (2.3%) identified themselves as belonging to a non-Christian denomination, which is too small a number to be included.
2. One should be aware that the relation between religion and mental health is not only ambiguous but also controversial, mainly due to the heavily subsidised studies by the Templeton foundation (Wulff 2001/2002).
3. We used the terminology 'traditionally religious' versus 'contemporary religious' as working definitions. What we mean by 'contemporary religious' is difficult to define, but is sometimes called 'spiritual', 'invisible', 'implicit', 'individualised', 'non-institutionalised', and so on. A general, commonly used terminology is not yet available.

CHAPTER 5

PRAYING AND COPING.

THE RELATION BETWEEN VARIETIES OF PRAYING AND RELIGIOUS COPING STYLES.⁵

This study focuses on different varieties of prayer in relation to different coping styles. 337 Dutch and Flemish people answered a questionnaire comprising Pargament's religious coping scale, the Receptivity coping scale of Alma, Pieper and van Uden (2003), and a Dutch prayer inventory. Three types of prayer were distinguished: the religious, the petitionary and the meditative prayer. The first two are typically traditional, involving a classical image of a personal God, while the third one is modern, focusing on the self rather than on God. This distinction applies more or less to the three coping styles of Pargament as well as to the Receptivity scale. Pargament's religious coping styles, i.e. the collaborative and the deferring coping styles, assume the presence of an active and personal God, a view lacking in the Receptive coping styles. Based on this resemblance, an analysis of the relationship between coping styles and the varieties of prayer was made, which showed that (1) a relation was found between the religious prayer and the collaborative and deferring coping styles, (2) a relation was also found between the meditative prayer and the Receptive coping styles, and (3) no relation was found between the petitionary prayer and the deferring style.

5.1 Introduction

The vast number of studies addressing religious coping provide clear evidence of the important role played by religion in confronting life's problems, particularly existential ones. Although not all coping behaviour is religious, coping and religion can merge, where individuals with a religious orientation facing stressful events resort to praying. Since it is still not clear how praying is needed as a coping strategy, this

⁵ This chapter is a slightly adapted version of: Bänziger, S., van Uden, M.H.F., & Janssen, J. (in press). Praying and coping: The relation between varieties of praying and religious coping styles. *Mental health, Religion & Culture*.

article focuses on the relation between different religious coping styles and varieties of prayer.

5.1.1 Religious coping

The foremost scholar of religious coping nowadays is Kenneth Pargament. He postulated (1997) that during stressful life events, common religious beliefs can be translated into specific ways of coping, and these coping methods may have implications for physical and mental outcomes. People are more likely to use religious attributes and coping when they are faced with extreme, uncontrollable situations than during other types of less stressful events (Miner & McKnight, 1999). In 1988, Pargament and his colleagues presented three styles of religious coping in the problem solving process (Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway, Grevengeod, Newman & Jones, 1988). Research showed that individuals often use one of three orientations when using religion to gain control over a stressful situation: (1) self-directing style: self-directed coping where people seek control through their own initiative rather than through help from God; (2) deferring style: passive religious deferral where control of the situation is put in God's hands; or (3) collaborative style: collaborative coping where one seeks control through a partnership with God. These styles appear to be related to the way people deal with issues of responsibility and control in religious coping activities. This applies particularly to the locus of responsibility of problem solving, which can be either the individual or God, while the problem-solving process can be either active or passive. These styles, therefore, differ in two key dimensions: God versus human-being (individual) and active versus passive.

5.1.2 Receptivity Scale

Elaborating on the two key dimensions (God versus human-being and active versus passive), Alma, Pieper and van Uden (2003) reported a problem with Pargament's threefold conceptualisation of religious

coping (self-directing, deferring and collaborative). The underlying view of a personal God, ignores the idea of a more impersonal God, which is probably more common in the Netherlands, which is a throughout secularised culture (Janssen & Prins, 2000; van der Ven, 1998). To do justice to this more impersonal view of God and to overcome problems with research in the Dutch society, the Receptivity Scale (Alma, Pieper & van Uden, 2003; van Uden, Pieper, & Alma, 2004) was developed. This alternative scale takes also into account that people are not always directly focused on the solution of problems, either with or without God. A receptive attitude might allow them to accept what they cannot control. Thus, combining the three coping styles of Pargament and the Receptivity coping style leads to four coping styles which vary on the two underlying dimensions: God vs. human-being and active vs. passive (Table 1).

However, in a recent study (Van Uden et al., 2004), it was found that the 8-item version of the Receptivity Scale contains two subscales: one referring indirectly to an agent who helps to cope with problems, for example *'When I have problems, I trust that a solution will be presented to me'*. Another one referring to an attitude of trust without the feeling of being helped by an agent, for example *'In difficult situations I open myself to solutions that arise'* (see Appendix 1 for complete scale).

Table 1. Three coping styles of problem-solving (Pargament et al., 1988) (bold), and the Receptivity coping style (Alma, Pieper, van Uden, 2003) (italic).

		Person	
		active	passive
God	active	collaborative style	deferring style
	passive	self-directing style	<i>receptive style</i>

The Receptive-Agent style related positively to Pargament's deferring and collaborative coping styles and related negatively to the self-directing scale. The Receptive-No Agent style, however, did not relate

significantly to any of the scales mentioned. Van Uden et al. concluded that the Receptive-No Agent style is clearly less religious in a traditional way than the Receptive-Agent style.

5.1.3 Praying as a coping strategy

Praying is the most frequently practiced form of religiosity and many scholars agree with James that it is '*the soul and essence of religion*' (James, 1985/1902, p.365; Brede Kristensen, 1971; Francis & Evans, 1995). Although it includes more aspects than just coping, prayer can be said to be the most commonly used religious coping device to deal with stress and health problems (e.g. Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). As our focus is also on praying as a coping strategy, other aspects of praying will be given less attention here.

During the last decades, many scholars have stressed the importance of praying in the coping process (e.g. Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis & Gruen, 1986; Pargament, 1997; Parker & Brown, 1982). Moreover, plenty of empirical studies (merely medical) have provided evidence of the positive effects of praying on physical and mental health (e.g. Baldacchino & Draper, 2001; Brown, 1994; Cardella & Friedlander, 2004; Francis & Evans, 1995; Maltby, Lewis, & Day, 1999; Taylor, Outlaw, Bernardo & Roy, 1999; VandeCreek, Janus, Pennebaker, & Binau, 2002). The person who prays attains a feeling of inner peace, of relief, and of power and support, and the resulting psychological effects can subsequently influence his or her physical health. According to Hood, et al. (1996), '*praying is first and foremost an interpretive activity*' (p. 397). Thus, prayer conveys and reinforces various meanings of life and life events, and as a result '*prayer makes life meaningful, endows people with strength, and makes them feel good*' (Hood, et al., 1996, p. 399).¹

5.1.4 Previous research on praying

It is beyond the scope of this article to present a complete overview of empirical studies addressing praying. And since we are particularly interested in secularised Dutch culture, we shall concentrate on the research conducted by Janssen et al. (1990, 2000, 2003). They explored the prayer practices and varieties of prayer among Dutch youth (Janssen et al., 1990, 2000) and Dutch adults (Bänziger, Janssen, & Scheepers, submitted) by analysing open-ended questions². This procedure leads to a better understanding of the actual religious practices in a secularised society such as the Netherlands, where religion appears to be individualised rather than institutionalised (Becker & Vink, 1994; Houtman & Mascini, 2002). Their studies clearly show that praying can be described as a ritual act, which consists of several different aspects or, in their own words, structural elements, such as speech acts (e.g. asking, thanking, talking), motives (e.g. death, illness) and effects (e.g. inner peace, strength, relief), and direction (to whom or to what the prayer is directed: e.g. God, higher being). In addition, Janssen et al. hypothesised four types of prayer: religious, petitionary, meditative and psychological (Janssen, Prins, van der Lans, & Bearveldt, 2000), derived of Heilers original typology (1921) but based primarily on the structural elements: direction, effect, action, and need. The emphasis of the four types differs: in religious prayer it is on direction, i.e. the communion with God is central. In petitionary prayer the main focus is on the effect, which should be real or concrete. In meditative prayer it is on the action, need and effect being rather abstract and cognitive. In psychological prayer it is on the psychological need to pray, regardless of any appropriate effect. This last type could also be called 'impulsive prayer' in accordance with Heiler (1921, p.11) who defined the universal impulse to pray as '*a cry for help*'.

Although a follow-up study among youth (Janssen et al., 2000) identified only three types of prayer, i.e. a combination of the petitionary/ religious prayer, the meditative prayer, and the

psychological prayer (and this last correlated substantially with the first two), a subsequent, nation wide follow-up study (Bänziger, Janssen, & Scheepers, submitted) identified four types. The religious and the petitionary are typical traditionally religious, involving a classical image of a personal God. On the other hand, there is the meditative prayer and the psychological prayer, which can be seen as typically modern individualised forms of religiosity or spirituality, in which the focus is predominantly on the individual itself instead on God (Bänziger et al., submitted).

5.1.5 Coping styles and varieties of praying

Taking into account the two key dimensions of Pargament's coping styles, i.e. the locus of responsibility (God versus human-being) and the problem-solving process (active versus passive), we see a remarkable similarity between the coping styles and the four varieties of prayer. The religious and the petitionary prayers involve a personal God, whereas the meditative and the psychological prayers focus on the individual process. Based on this correspondence, Janssen et al. (2000, 2003) hypothesised a relationship between Pargament's coping strategies and the varieties of prayer, as described in chapter 2 of present thesis. The deferring style of problem solving, in which God is active and the person is passive, matches petitionary prayer for God's active intervention. The collaborative style, in which both God and the person are active, matches religious prayer with the focus on communion and contact with God. The self-directing style where in the problem-solving process the person is active but God is passive, matches psychological prayer which seems to arise from the need for psychological relief rather than the need for an active solution from God. Following the logic of this classification, a fourth style of problem solving is conceivable in which both God and the individual are passive. Pargament et al. do not define this style, but the Receptive style of van Uden et al. does. This style corresponds perfectly with meditative prayer, in which the responsibility for problem solving

is neither located in the individual, nor in an active personal God. Meditative prayer can therefore be considered a receptive style of problem solving, in which both parties are passive (Table 2, Janssen et al., 2000, 2003).

Table 2. Three coping styles of Pargament et al. (1988) (bold), and the Receptivity scale of van Uden and colleagues (2004) (italic), compared with the prediction for four varieties of praying (underlined). Source of Table: Janssen, et al., 2000.

Praying and coping types		Person	
		active	passive
God	active	collaborative mode <u>religious praying</u>	deferring mode <u>petitionary praying</u>
	passive	self-directing mode <u>psychological praying</u>	<i>receptive mode</i> <u>meditative praying</u>

5.1.6 Research questions

Elaborating on previous findings, we will now focus on the relationship between prayer varieties and coping strategies. Our starting point is the model presented in Table 2. To broaden the scope of our research questions, we shall take into account the recent finding of the two subscales of the Receptivity scale; the Receptive-Agent style and the Receptive-No Agent style (van Uden, Pieper, Alma, 2004). This leads to the following questions: (1) Which varieties of prayer can be distinguished in our present sample? (2) What is the relation between Pargament's three coping styles and van Uden, Pieper and Alma's Receptivity subscales? (3) How are the varieties of prayer and religious coping strategies connected? and what does this tell us about religious coping in a secularised society such as the Netherlands?

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Participants

Data for this study were drawn from a sample which consisted of 241 Dutch adults and students and 96 Dutch-speaking Flemish adults. The data were gathered in 2002 and 2003 in cooperation with colleagues from Leuven (Neyrinck & Hutsebaut, 2004), Tilburg, Utrecht, and Leiden (van Uden et al., 2004). Of the 337 respondents, 120 are male, 217 female. The average age is 31 (ranging from 19 to 82, $SD=15$). 48% consider themselves to be Christian believers (28% Roman Catholic, 20 % Protestant), 25% of the respondents are non-believers, 10% consider themselves to be agnostic, and 17% filled in otherwise³.

5.2.2 Measures

Participants filled in a questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously. The questionnaire comprised two socio-demographic variables: age and gender, and four variables concerning religiosity. Two of these variables measured traditional religiosity: church membership and church attendance. The other two were general questions on religiosity. First, prayer frequency was measured by means of the question: Do you ever pray? (5-point Likert type, 1 = no, never, 5 = yes, weekly or daily) Secondly, subjective religiosity was measured by the question 'How religious are you?' (7-point Likert type, 1 = not at all, 7, very much). The 18 items of Pargament's Religious Coping scale and the 8 items of the Receptivity scale (van Uden, Pieper, and Alma) were combined to measure coping. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). Factor analysis resulted in 5 factors: Collaborative style ($M=1.86$, $\alpha = .96$), Deferring style ($M = 1.52$, $\alpha = .91$), Self-Directing style ($M = 3.94$, $\alpha = .93$), Receptive-Agent style ($M = 3.06$, $\alpha = .82$), and Receptive-No Agent ($M = 3.78$, $\alpha = .65$). Finally, we added a prayer questionnaire with 24 items of a 7-point Likert-type (1 = never, 7 = always).

The construction of the latter needs some explanation (see also: Bänziger, Janssen & van Uden, 2005). The 24 items of the prayer scale were derived from responses to six open-ended questions on praying in previous research (Bänziger, Janssen, & Scheepers, submitted), i.e. ‘what is prayer to you?’, ‘where do you pray?’, ‘when do you pray?’, ‘how do you pray?’, ‘when do you feel the need to pray?’, and ‘what do you hope to achieve by praying?’. Answers to these questions (qualitative data) were analysed and recoded into quantitative data⁴. Factor-analysis on this quantitative data showed four factors representing four prayer types: (1) religious prayer, (2) petitionary prayer, (3) meditative prayer, and (4) psychological prayer. Each prayer type was then characterised by the highest loading items of the factor analysis (see Table 3).

Table 3. Six characteristics of each prayer type derived from qualitative research (Bänziger, Janssen, Scheepers, submitted).

<i>petitionary prayer</i>	<i>religious prayer</i>	<i>meditative prayer</i>	<i>psychological prayer</i>
asking for others death results power/support (as an effect) when I need something	kneeling contact with God forgiveness in church thanksgiving fixed moments	thought/insight inner rest consider/reflecting in myself everywhere nature	at difficult moments sadness higher power in bed pour out one’s heart power/support (as a wish to attain)

We used the six highest loading items per factor to make a prayer inventory, transforming each item into a closed question with a 7-point Likert scale. For example: ‘asking’ became ‘In my prayers I ask for certain things’, or ‘inner peace’ became ‘I pray for inner peace’. This procedure resulted in 24 prayer questions, consisting of several structural elements such as speech acts, bodily postures, needs and effects, places and times (see Appendix 2 for the complete questionnaire). Thus, by constructing items acquired from qualitative

data, we expected to overcome problems inherent in analysing qualitative data without losing the strong validity of qualitative data.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Prayer frequencies

Prayer frequency was measured by the question: Do you ever pray? (1=no, never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = sometimes, 4 = regularly, 5 = yes, often). 31% of the respondents answered that they never pray. About a quarter pray often, 15% pray regularly, 12% sometimes and 16% pray only occasionally. There are no differences between men and women in prayer frequency, but a Pearson's correlation of .30 ($p < .000$) between age and prayer frequency indicates that elderly people pray more frequently than younger people.

5.3.2 Varieties of prayer

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to test the hypothesised four varieties of prayer, but the results could not confirm the hypothesis ($\chi^2 = 699$, $df = 224$, $RMSEA = .096$). Subsequently, a principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on the praying items to discover the number of varieties of prayer. This factor analysis resulted in three factors which represent the meditative prayer (alpha: .85), the petitionary prayer (alpha: .89), and the religious prayer (alpha: .87) respectively. Explained variance was 61% (see Appendix 3 for details). A first conclusion must be that the four expected types of prayer cannot be confirmed. The expected six items of the psychological prayer (see Table 3 and Appendix 3) merged into the meditative factor (2 items), the petitionary factor (3 item), and the religious factor (1 item), but most of these 'psychological items' load higher than .40 on two or even three factors. The expected six items of the meditative, religious and petitionary prayers corresponded as predicted, with two exceptions. The

two exceptions were 'praying anywhere', which loaded .41 on the religious factor, and 'asking something for others', which loaded .48 on the expected petitionary factor, but loaded .52 on the religious factor. Furthermore, we see two items which loaded higher than .40 on all factors, namely 'pour out one's heart' and 'power/support'. Apparently, these aspects are important in all types of prayer.

Hence, the three prayer varieties can be described as follow:

Meditative prayer represented by factor 1 includes cognitive actions such as 'thought/insight' (factor loading: .84), and 'consideration/reflection' (.70), as well as 'inner peace' (.67), and 'looking inwards' (.81). The items 'sense of power/support' and 'pour out one's heart' also load on this factor, even though both are originally psychological items.

Factor 2 represents the petitionary prayer, which is characterised by typically petitionary aspects such as 'praying for results' (.83), 'praying when I need something' (.81), and 'asking' (.69). Other important items are 'death/illness' (.56) and 'power/support as an effect' (.48). It also contains the items 'sadness' (.62), 'at difficult moments' (.59), and 'praying in bed' (.58). These were predicted as psychological items but the first two correspond quite well with the petitionary prayer, as a prayer type where people when facing problems pray for a solution.

Religious prayer represented by factor 3 contains items like 'thanking God' (.72), and 'contact with God' (.66). Other items of this factor are typically traditional prayer items, such as 'kneeling' (.58), 'forgiveness' (.70), 'in church' (.65), and 'at fixed moments' (.61). Items which load on this factor as well as on another factor are 'talking with a higher power or suchlike', and 'asking something for others'. Finally, the item 'praying anywhere', which was supposed to be a meditative item, loaded .41 on the religious factor.

To conclude, three varieties of prayer could be distinguished with the 'closed' prayer questionnaire in the present sample. These results are not exactly in line with our prediction; the psychological prayer merged into the other factors, and most items of them load (> .40) on more than

one factor. However, they do correspond with the previous study among students (Janssen et al., 2000), in which the psychological factor also merged into the religious/petitionary factor and the meditative factor. For the time being it is not clear whether the absence of the psychological factor can be attributed to the construction of the questionnaire or to the fact that psychological aspects are an underlying feature of all prayers and not a separate factor as such.

5.3.3 Coping scales

To examine whether the Receptivity subscales contribute to a broader range of coping styles and as such complement Pargament's scales, Pearson's correlations between the coping styles were calculated. We found several significant correlations (Table 4). The Receptive-Agent style is positively related to the Collaborative and Deferring styles ($r = .50, .44$), and is also related to Receptive-No Agent ($r = .50$). Furthermore, we see that the Self-Directing style is negatively related to all coping styles, and that the Receptive-No Agent is not related to anything.

Table 4. Correlations between coping styles and gender and age. $N = 325$

	collaborative	deferring	self-directing	receptive agent	receptive no agent
gender	-.10	-.14*	.08	-.05	-.01
age	.37**	.42**	-.31**	.23**	.06
collaborative	1	.79**	-.85**	.50**	.16*
deferring		1	-.72**	.44**	.14
self-directing			1	-.43**	-.11
receptive agent				1	.50**
receptive no agent					1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

These results are in line with a previous study by van Uden et al. (2004). Thus, we may conclude that the Receptivity (sub)scales and Pargament's coping scales do indeed measure different things, although, of course, the Receptive-Agent is more traditionally religious than the Receptive-No Agent.

To define the different types of coping and prayer more precisely, we shall now relate them to the four religious variables: church attendance, church membership, subjective religiosity and prayer frequency. We expect church attendance and church membership to be representative variables of a more traditional religiosity. Subjective religiosity and prayer frequency can represent both traditional and modern religiosity. Traditionally religious styles of coping and prayer will be therefore positively related to all these four variables. But the less traditional or more individualised forms of coping and prayer will be related to subjective religiosity and prayer frequency only, and not to church membership and church attendance. Thus, we distinguish two dimensions: a more traditional way of religion (more connected with institutionalised religiosity), and forms of religiosity or spirituality which are less traditional or less institutionalised.

Coping

Firstly, we will focus on the coping styles. Table 5 shows that the collaborative and deferring styles are typically traditionally religious with high correlations on church attendance ($r = .54$, $r = .48$, $p < .01$), church membership ($r = .54$, $r = .48$, $p < .01$), subjective religiosity ($r = .66$, $r = .50$, $p < .01$), and prayer frequency ($r = .56$, $r = .39$, $p < .01$). The self-directing style is exactly the opposite, correlating negatively with all the religious variables. With regard to the two Receptivity subscales, we see that the Receptive-Agent style is positively related to all the religious measures. However, the correlations with subjective religiosity ($r = .40$, $p < .01$) and prayer frequency ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) are significantly higher than with church attendance ($r = .23$, $p < .01$) and church membership ($r = .16$,

$p < .01$) (Steiger's T-test for correlations: $t = -2.32$ $p = 0.01$; $t = -3.51$, $p = .000$; $t = -0.94$, $p = .17$; $t = -1.59$, $p = .05$ respectively). The Receptive-No Agent style is not related to church attendance and church membership ($r = -.04$, $r = -.04$, $p > .10$), and even although the correlations with subjective religiosity ($r = .13$, $p = .10$) and with prayer frequency are not significant ($r = .13$, $p = .10$), they point in the presupposed direction. Steiger's significance T test for correlations shows that the correlations with subjective religiosity and with prayer frequency are significantly higher than with Church attendance and Church membership (Steigers T-test for correlations: $t = -2.17$, $p = .01$; $t = -1.92$, $p = .03$; $t = -2.26$ $p = .01$; $t = -1.74$, $p = .04$). Thus, we consider this coping style to be more modern than traditional, too.

To summarise, the results show three groups of coping styles. Firstly, Pargament's religious coping modes (collaborative and deferring) which can be characterised as typically traditional. Secondly, the self-directing style which is non-religious. And thirdly, the Receptivity subscales, which both tend to be individualised or non-institutionalised religiosity rather than traditional religiosity, even if the Receptive-Agent subscale has a stronger orientation towards traditional religiosity than the Receptive-No Agent subscale.

Praying

As regards the varieties of prayer, we see first of all that the religious prayer is evidently a typically traditional prayer type (Table 5), with high correlations on church attendance ($r = .50$, $p < .01$), church membership ($r = .57$, $p < .01$), subjective religiosity ($r = .63$, $p < .01$), and prayer frequency ($r = .54$, $p < .01$). The petitionary prayer share this tendency, although not as strongly ($r = .23$, $.39$, $.36$, $.31$, respectively. $p < .01$). The meditative prayer is most interesting because it correlates significantly stronger with subjective religiosity ($r = .46$, $p < .01$) and prayer frequency ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) than with church attendance ($r = .22$, $p < .05$) and church membership ($r = .24$, $p < .01$) (Steiger's Z significance T test between correlations: $t = -3.37$, p

= .00; $t = -4.67$, $p = .00$; $t = -3.23$, $p = .00$; $t = -4.14$, $p = .00$). Thus, the meditative prayer is predominantly related to individualised or non-institutionalised religiosity.

Table 5. Correlations of coping styles and varieties of prayer with religiosity variables. N=157

coping style	church attendance	church member	subjective religiosity	praying frequency
collaborative	.54**	.54**	.66**	.56**
deferring	.48**	.48**	.50**	.39**
self-directing	-.51**	-.52**	-.68**	-.48**
receptive-agent	.23**	.16*	.40**	.31**
receptive no-agent	-.04	-.04	.13	.13
prayer type				
religious	.50**	.57**	.63**	.54**
meditative	.22**	.24**	.46**	.58**
petitionary	.23**	.39**	.36**	.31**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.3.4 Relation between Praying and Coping

Although previous results provided strong and consistent evidence for a relationship between praying and religious coping, how they relate to each other is still not clear. Therefore, we focus on the relationship between coping scales and types of prayer.

We expected that the religious prayer type would relate to the collaborative coping style, the meditative prayer to the Receptive-No Agent style, and the petitionary prayer to the deferring style. Table 6 shows the partial correlations between the three varieties of prayer on the one hand and Pargament's scales and the Receptivity scales on the other. Religious prayer does indeed correlate positively with the collaborative style ($r = .61$, $p < .01$). However, it also relates to the deferring style ($r = .48$, $p < .01$), and although significantly lesser, to both Receptivity subscales ($r = .22$, and $r = .19$) ((Steiger's Z significance T test

between correlations: $t = 6.64$, $p < .000$; $t = 5.83$, $p < .000$; $t = 3.84$, $p < .000$; $t = 3.58$, $p < .000$ respectively). Furthermore, there is a negative relation to the self-directing style ($r = -.44$, $p < .01$). As predicted, the meditative prayer correlates with the Receptive-No Agent style ($r = .23$, $p < .01$), but then again also with the Receptive-Agent style ($r = .27$, $p < .000$). Meditative prayer is negatively related to the deferring style ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$), and not related to the collaborative style. Finally, the petitionary prayer is only significantly (negatively) related to the Receptive-No Agent style ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). There is no significant relation with the deferring style.

Table 6. Partial correlates of the three varieties of prayer with coping styles. $N = 208$

prayer types	collaborative style	deferring style	self-directing style	receptive agent	receptive no agent
religious	.61**	.48**	-.44**	.22**	.19*
meditative	.00	-.18*	.02	.27**	.23**
petitionary	.05	.09	-.08	-.12	-.26**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: partial correlates were used for the prayer types because of the high correlations between the three prayer types (rel-med: $r = .72$, rel-pet: $r = .70$, med-pet: $r = .61$).

We are led to the conclusion that certain varieties of prayer are connected to certain styles of coping. More precisely, these relationships become most noticeable in the religious prayer, which is the most traditionally religious prayer type, and in the meditative prayer, which is the least traditionally religious prayer type. The first type is related to Pargament's traditional religious coping styles and the latter to the Receptive coping styles (both with the agent type and without the agent type). Apart from a negative correlation with the Receptivity-No Agent style, the petitionary prayer shows no other significant correlation.

5.4 Conclusions and discussion

Although little is known about the specific factors that contribute to religious coping behaviour, it is clear that praying is an important religious activity in the coping process. The main goal of the present study is to obtain insight into the complex relation between religious coping and praying, in particular in a secularised culture such as the Dutch.

In this study we focused primarily on different varieties of prayer. Particularly in the Netherlands, where prayer practices survive despite a decline in traditional religiosity (e.g. Eisinga, Coenders, Felling, te Grotenhuis, Oomens, & Scheepers, 2002; Felling, Peters, & Scheepers, 2000; Halman, 2001), praying cannot simply be identified as the well known traditional formula performed in the church or at home before dinner.

Therefore, a prayer questionnaire was constructed to measure different types of prayer. The construction of this questionnaire differed in procedure from other questionnaires: we constructed items from a broad range of praying aspects, such as acts, needs, effects, places, times and postures, all derived from the qualitative data obtained from previous open-ended questions. The advantage of this procedure is validity: we categorised and operationalised the actual words and expressions of the people who pray. The disadvantage, however, is the persisting relations between the various items: everybody who prays does so sometimes in bed, talks with God, asks for things, and attains a certain feeling of relief. Probably as a result of this, we found only three varieties of prayer: the meditative prayer, the religious prayer and the petitionary prayer. The supposed fourth variety, the psychological prayer, could not be distinguished.

Next, we focused on religious coping. Pargament's religious coping scale and van Uden et al.'s Receptivity scale were used to measure the coping behaviour of our sample. A number of conclusions could be

drawn. The self-directing style of Pargament's religious coping scale can hardly be called a *religious* coping scale. The self-directing coping style is not related to any of the religious measures such as church attendance, church membership, subjective religiosity, and praying frequency. In addition, it correlated negatively with the collaborative and deferring styles. These results suggest that the nature of the self-directing religious coping construct may be not religious at all, what corroborates with the same recent finding of Pargament and colleagues (Phillips, Pargament, Lynn & Crossley, 2004).

Subsequently, the question is whether or not the Receptivity scale offers a valuable contribution to religious coping in the secularised Netherlands. The present study confirms that the Receptivity scale consists of two subscales, one with a supposed agent, and one without a supposed agent. The Receptive-Agent subscale tends towards more traditional religious coping, though, not in the same degree as the collaborative and deferring styles. There is also a clear link with non-traditional measures. The Receptive-No Agent, on the other hand, is not related to traditional religious characteristics. This style represents individualised or non-institutionalised religiosity. Thus, the Receptivity scale, and in particular the Receptive-No Agent subscale, may represent the coping behaviour of those Dutch and Flemish people who participate in non-traditional individualised religiosity.

Finally, we combined the prayer varieties with the coping styles to gain insight into their relationships. First of all, the results showed a strong connection between the religious prayer and the collaborative and deferring coping styles, and, secondly, a connection between the meditative prayer and the Receptivity scales. There was no significant correlation between the petitionary prayer and the deferring coping style. This is rather surprising; we assumed the petitionary prayer to be pre-eminently related to coping, as the very distinguishing features of a petition are the occurrence of a problem and the hope for a solution. So, in other words, it is a way of coping. The question is why we did not

find a logical connection between the petitionary prayer and the deferring style or an other religious coping style. A possible answer may be found in a new theory by Pargament, Koenig and Perez (2000), who have recently developed the RCOPE: a theoretically based measurement tool that assesses the full range of religious coping methods. The RCOPE is a more extensive scale than the previously threefold religious coping scale. One added aspect of the RCOPE, which merits our particular attention, is the 'pleading approach'. Pleading for direct intercession is the feature of this style, i.e. seeking control indirectly by pleading to God for a miracle or a divine intervention. This defines a prayer of petition precisely. Consequently, the absence of a relation between petitionary prayer and coping in our present study could be caused by the absence of a corresponding coping style: the pleading approach. We suppose that the pleading approach will match petitionary prayer, but this hypothesis must wait for corroboration until a further study.

In this study, the results stress two dimensions: (1) a traditional religious dimension, including a personal God, represented by collaborative and deferring coping and religious prayer, and (2) an individualised religious or spiritual dimension, including an impersonal image of God or no god image at all, represented by the Receptivity coping styles and meditative prayer. In a secularised society, such as the Netherlands, a declining belief in traditional religion goes hand in hand with a growing individualised spirituality (Janssen, 1998). Such a society is likely to develop new forms of religiosity, and thereby new forms of prayer, which fit into the range of thoughts of the contemporary praying subject. Van Uden, Pieper and Alma's Receptivity scale may offer a valuable instrument to gain insight into this process of religious modernisation.

Notes

1. With regard to the effectiveness of praying, we would like to bring forward the so-called intercessory prayer studies. During these studies an organised prayer group prays on behalf of an experimental group of patients, but not for the control group. The outcomes of these studies showed that the intercessory prayers have a positive effect on the health of the experimental group. This would 'prove' the existence of divine intervention. However, let aside the rather questionable goal of proving the existence of divine intervention or God, a recent Cochrane Review (Roberts, Ahmed, & Hall, 2006) stated that the outcomes are too inconclusive to uphold the conclusion that intercessory prayers have a positive effect.

2. Six open-ended questions were administered: 'what is prayer to you?', 'where do you pray?', 'when do you pray?', 'how do you pray?', 'when do you feel the need to pray?', and 'what do you hope to achieve by praying?' As a result of using this (self-reporting) method, the first question, which addresses the definition of praying, achieved a broad range of answers, varying from typically traditional definitions of praying in line with the Christian doctrines to very individual and not necessarily traditional practices.

3. It should be mentioned that the present sample is more religiously orientated than the Dutch population. In a nationwide survey (SOCON, N=1008, Eisinga, Coenders, Felling, te Grotenhuis, Oomens, & Scheepers, 2002) conducted in 2000, 62% of the respondents prayed, and 38% never prayed. In the present sample, 69% of the people pray and 31% never pray. Furthermore, 39% of the Dutch population consider themselves to be (Christian) church members, and 49% attend church. The present sample shows 48% and 54%, respectively. The reason why the present sample is more religiously orientated may be due to the fact that a substantial part of the sample consists of (Christian) Flemish people and theology students.

4. The responses to the open-ended questions of the participants were analysed with TexTable, a computer programme for content analysis of open-ended answers in large data sets. (see also chapter 3).

Appendix 1. Items of the Receptivity subscales of Alma, Pieper, & van Uden (2003).

Receptive-Agent

1. After a period of difficulties, the deeper significance of my problems is revealed to me.
2. When I have problems, I trust that a solution will be presented to me.
3. When I find myself in times of trouble, I have faith in the eventual revelation of their meaning and purpose.
4. When I wonder how to solve a problem, I trust that a solution will be shown to me in time.
5. When I am worried, earlier experiences make me trust that a way out will be presented to me.

Receptive-No-Agent

6. In difficult situations I open myself to solutions that arise.
7. In difficult situations I trust that a way out will unfold.
8. In solving my problems I am sometimes struck by the fact that things just fall into place.

Appendix 2. Prayer inventory, 24 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale.

never	occasionally	sometimes	regularly	often	very often	always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I pray at fixed moments
2. During my prayers I feel to be in contact with God
3. I pray for inner peace
4. In my prayers I ask for forgiveness
5. I pray for support and power
6. When I am confronted with death or illness, I pray
7. I pray anywhere
8. In my prayers I ask God or a higher power for certain things
9. I pray on my knees
10. I pray to attain a desired result
11. During my prayers I consider all kinds of things
12. I pray in church
13. When I pray, I look inwards
14. Difficult moments are a reason to pray
15. When I pray, I ask things for other people
16. In nature I start to pray spontaneously
17. During my prayer I can pour out my heart
18. When I pray I am actually talking to a higher power or suchlike
19. I pray when I feel sad
20. I pray to thank God
21. I pray in bed at night
22. When I pray I feel that I gain power and support
23. I pray when I need something
24. When I pray I make up my mind.

Appendix 3. Component matrix of factor analysis on the items of the prayer questionnaire; only loadings > .40 presented in the table. Factor 1 represents meditative prayer, factor 2 petitionary prayer and factor 3 represents religious prayer.

	Factors		
	1. med. pr.	2. pet.pr.	3. rel. pr.
thought/insight	.835		
looking inwards	.811		
feeling power/support (psy)	.698		
consideration/reflection	.697		
inner peace	.674		
pour out one's heart (psy)	.554	.416	.417
praying for results		.826	
praying when I need something		.805	
asking		.685	.499
sadness (psy)	.497	.617	
at difficult moments (psy)	.561	.594	
praying in bed (psy)		.578	
death or illness		.555	.483
power/support as effect	.471	.477	.473
thanking God		.426	.720
forgiveness			.697
contact with God			.656
in church			.654
at fixed moments			.606
kneeling			.576
talking with higher power or suchlike (psy)		.522	.548
asking things for others		.480	.518
praying anywhere			.409
Cronbach's alfa	.85	.89	.87

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. Explained variance: 61%.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In the Netherlands, institutional churches have lost many of their traditional functions and in general religion seems to be losing ground (e.g. Dekker, de Hart, & Peters, 1997; te Grotenhuis & Scheepers, 2001). This secularisation process is also present in other European countries (e.g. Halman, Luijkx, van Zundert, 2005). Compared to Europe, however, there is a remarkable development in the Netherlands which is not seen in other countries: despite the decline of church membership and church attendance, there are many Dutch people who consider themselves believers and who practise praying (Halman, Luijkx, van Zundert, 2005, de Hart, 2006).

This thesis dealt with this practise of prayer. Its two main purposes were: (1) *to describe the praying practices of the Dutch population* and (2) *to investigate why people still pray in a secularised country such as the Netherlands*. In order to get more insight into these purposes we focussed on four research questions: *How do people pray?*, *What kind of prayers can we distinguish?*, *What kind of people practise non-institutionalised prayers?*, and *Why do people pray in a secularised society?* A broad range of research methodologies were utilized, such as qualitative and quantitative data, the development of a prayer inventory, and hypothesis testing research. Yet, before drawing general conclusions, we will summarise the studies described in the previous chapters and their results.

6.1 Major findings

The first two chapters of this thesis are theoretical chapters. Chapter 1 provided a general introduction. It started with a short history of prayer and presented a brief overview of scientific studies on prayer. Then,

descriptions of the research questions and design were given, and it ended with an outline of the coming chapters.

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical and methodological framework. First, it described the prior studies by Janssen, et al. (1990, 1994, 2000) on the praying practices of young people. The major findings of these earlier studies were: 1) the formulation of a structural definition of praying, as a tripartite ritual of need, act and effect, performed in a three-dimensional space of direction, place and time, 2) a differentiation between various types of prayer and, finally, 3) some interesting research subjects were proposed, such as social aspects of praying behaviour, and the hypothesised relation between varieties of praying and religious coping styles.

Chapter 3 described the first empirical study, which was based on the research explained in chapter 2. An inventory of the praying practices of a representative Dutch sample was presented. Prayer frequency was measured using the question: how often do you pray? Analysis revealed that 60% of the Dutch population prays. Subsequently, six open-ended questions were posed, and the answers to these questions were analysed and recoded into quantitative data. The latter provided the possibility of further analyses and possible answers to questions, such as what is praying and how do people pray.

In general, praying behaviour can be considered as a ritual (e.g. Gill, 1987), and a ritual can be described as a tripartite structure, or as Staal illustrated it as *'entering, abiding in and subsequently leaving the sanctuary'* (Staal, 1978). Analogously, a minimal description of the prayer ritual could be read as: a beginning, the act of prayer itself, and an end. A more comprehensive approach includes that praying involves speech, is expressed by posture and takes place in a certain environment. The description we used reads: *'a bodily and/or linguistic expression of a tripartite act of a need, speech and effect, in a three dimensional space of time, place and direction'*.

However, does this structural definition fit the definition provided by the respondents to the question: What is praying to you? The results showed that their initial focus lies predominantly on the act, and secondly, this act is directed to God or something else, furthermore, the act is always aimed at an effect. Aspects such as the need, place and time are mentioned only occasionally, and seem only to be present implicitly. In contrast, the element 'direction', i.e. God or Higher Being seems to be an unmistakable feature of prayer, because to whom or what people pray was not part of the question. Respondents named these aspects spontaneously. Moreover, the respondents did not expect God to be an acting 'agent'; the expected effects of prayer were all psychological in nature. Or to say: *'God is the unnameable, benevolent present one. Technically speaking, He functions as an indirect object, or to use a more apt term, as a Dativous, which literally means: that tends to give'* (Janssen, 2003).

The analyses of the six open-ended questions resulted in both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data provided a broad description of the praying activities of the Dutch. Subsequently, the qualitative data were recoded into quantitative data, on which a factor analysis was performed, distinguishing four different types of prayer: religious prayer, petitionary prayer, meditative prayer and psychological (or as we will call it in this chapter impulsive) prayer⁶. Religious prayer is characterised by concepts such as 'contact with God', 'praying in the church', 'kneeling', and 'giving thanks'. Petitionary prayer is characterised by 'asking God', 'death/illness', 'praying for others' and 'praying for results'. Meditative prayer can be typified by 'contemplating', 'to look into oneself', and 'inner peace'. Finally, impulsive prayer can be characterised by concepts including 'at difficult moments', 'talking to a higher power', 'sadness', and 'to pour out one's heart'. The first two types of prayer are related to church attendance and church membership, and can therefore be considered as traditional types

⁶ Originally, we used the term psychological prayer. However, since all types of prayer contain psychological elements, we prefer the term impulsive prayer, although this term does also not fit the precise meaning. This type of prayer aims at psychological effects, but is performed by an impulsive action.

of prayer. The meditative and impulsive prayers are not related to church attendance or membership. These varieties can be termed non-institutionalised, contemporary, individualised or spiritual. A precise terminology, however, is difficult since the above terms are not all-inclusive.

In daily practice of people, however, praying is always a combination of various types. There is no such thing as a purely religious or meditative prayer. Everybody who prays, does so sometimes in bed, asks for things or contemplates life. Nonetheless, distinguishing various types is important from a scientific point of view as it provides differentiation between predominant and non-dominant aspects of prayer in a particular culture. As a result, it emerged that in the Netherlands meditative and impulsive prayer occur much more often than religious and petitionary prayer.

Finally, comparing the motivations for praying to the achieved effects of prayer, the conclusion was that whether someone prays a traditional prayer or an individualised prayer, almost everyone prays for the same effects: inner peace, help, support, strength and power. People pray for psychological benefits or to cope with everyday problems, such as death, illness and misfortune.

Chapter 4 elaborated on the fact that the majority of the Dutch people do not pray in churches, which, in comparison to other countries, is quite remarkable. Either a country is secularised and people do not practise religious behaviour at all, such as in the Czech Republic or Estonia, or a country is predominantly religious and has a population which displays corresponding religious behaviour, such as Malta or Italy (Halman, Luijkx, van Zundert, 2005). In contrast, in the Netherlands, there is a situation which can be described as '*praying without belonging*'. There are more people who pray than there are church members.

So far, a large number of studies have been conducted to explore the differences between religious people and non-religious people. Take,

for example, the study by Batson and colleagues (1993), who discovered that, at least in the US, religion influences the level of mental health, prejudice and helping behaviour of people. In addition, many studies found that whether or not a person is religious depends largely on religious socialisation, i.e. whether or not the person is brought up religiously (e.g. Godin, 1958; Tamminen, 1991).

However, the group we focussed on was an unknown party; they do not attend church, but pray in private. The question was whether they are more like traditional believers or do they bear more resemblance to non-religious people? Moreover, why do these people pray? Is religious socialisation an explanatory factor for their behaviour?

To examine the various religious and non-religious beliefs, motivations and experiences (based on the above-mentioned study by Batson) of this group, and to test the hypothesis that religious socialisation explains their behaviour, this study compared people who pray without attending church (referred to as 'unchurched prayers') to two other groups: people who attend church and pray ('churchgoing prayers') and people who neither attend church nor pray ('non-religious group').

The results can be summarised as follows:

1. With regard to the beliefs and behaviours related to traditional religiosity (e.g. intrinsic/extrinsic, personal God image) the unchurched prayers are less traditionally religious than the churchgoing prayers, but significantly more traditionally religious than the non-religious group. In fact, they constitute the middle ground between the two. As hypothesised, religious socialisation is the most significant explaining factor for the variations found, i.e. whether or not a person believes in a personal God and being intrinsically/extrinsically oriented, depends on religious upbringing or other forms of religious socialisation.
2. With regard to contemporary religiosity (e.g. quest, mysticism, immanent god image), no differences were found between the unchurched prayers and churchgoing prayers. Both believe in these

contemporary features of religiosity to the same extent. Moreover, religious socialisation was not an influential factor, i.e. the level of quest orientation, mystical experiences, and the belief in an immanent God are not the result of a religious learning process.

3. With respect to mental health, prejudice and helping behaviour, and contrary to the results of Batson's study in the US, our findings were ambiguous and no clear pattern emerged. Also religious socialisation appeared not to be an influential factor for the differences in these variables.

This means that the beliefs, motivations and experiences, except of those related to traditional religiosity, are not the result of a socialisation process. In other words, the fact that, for example, unchurched prayers hold a stronger believe in an immanent God than members of the other groups, is not because they were taught to do so. Other reasons are responsible for these opinions and behaviour. Perhaps the above is due to the privatisation or individualisation of religion (e.g. Luckmann, 1967), in other words, people practise a kind of self-made 'bricolage' religiosity. Another reason may be that praying reveals itself as an effective coping strategy.

Coping is the subject of the 5th chapter. When it is not only a matter of being raised religiously or being member of a church that provokes such religious practices as praying, it may be triggered for the reason that praying fulfils a necessary psychological function. According to Pargament, religion in general, and prayer in particular, are often described as coping mechanisms: in difficult circumstances and in times of stress religious activity increases (Pargament, 1997). Moreover, health psychology with regard to coping strategies has suggested that prayer has adjunctive and therapeutic possibilities (Brown, 1994).

Chapter 5 therefore examined whether praying is related to religious coping and which varieties of prayer are related to which types of religious coping. First, we had to construct a prayer inventory, based

on the results of chapter 3. Despite the careful construction of the prayer inventory, the four hypothesised prayer styles could not be distinguished. The factor analysis resulted in only three factors: the religious prayer, the petitionary prayer and the meditative prayer. The six items of the impulsive (or psychological) prayer loaded on the other factors; four of the six loaded even on two or three factors simultaneously. The results of the analyses nevertheless revealed that prayer is connected to coping. Moreover, traditional type of prayer (i.e. religious prayer) is related to traditional forms of religious coping, such as the collaborative and deferring coping styles of Pargament (1997), whereas the non-institutionalised form of prayer (meditative prayer) is related to the receptivity coping styles, a coping scale constructed for religious coping in a secularised society (Alma, Pieper, & van Uden, 2003; van Uden, Pieper, Alma, 2004). The conclusion is that various types of prayer are available which meet people's personal needs, depending on what kind of religious coping a person uses.

6.2 General conclusion

6.2.1 Conclusions

Taken together, the empirical studies provide insight into the two main purposes of present thesis. As regards the first purpose '*to explore the praying practices of the Dutch population*' it turned out, first, that a majority of the Dutch practise praying, and in addition, that only a minority of this praying population attend church services or consider themselves to be a church member. Secondly, in general praying is regarded as a speech act, directed at God or a higher being, and is mostly aimed at a personal and psychological effect. Furthermore, four varieties of praying could be distinguished. Two can be classified as typically traditional prayer styles: the religious and petitionary prayer, and two can be

classified as individualised or non-institutionalised styles: the meditative and impulsive prayer.

So far, these findings imply that praying is fairly widespread and is not necessarily connected with a church or religious institution. Hence, the question occurs why people then pray at all?, which addresses the second purpose *'to investigate why people still practise praying in a secularised country such as the Netherlands'*. First, we focussed on religious socialisation, as a motive why people practise praying. The results indicate that religious socialisation is indeed an explaining factor for those people who are engaged in traditional religious practices. This conclusion, however, did not hold for those people engaged in non-institutional praying behaviour; religious socialisation had no effect on this particular group. Apparently, other explanations seem to be responsible for individualised or non-institutionalised praying behaviour. Indeed, in the last empirical study, we found that praying is related to religious coping, and furthermore, that various types of praying are related to various coping styles.

6.2.2 Coping

There is a remarkable development in the Netherlands: secularisation is an ongoing process. Notwithstanding this process, the majority of the Dutch pray. Most of them pray when they are in trouble, in particular when their problems cannot be solved. Moreover, they also pray because of the problems of others, usually family, friends and pets. These needs are caused by genuine situations of unhappiness, whilst the effects are formulated abstractly and in general terms. When they are ill they do not pray for immediate cure, but they pray for help, confidence and strength. Even if they pray because of the problems of someone else, people still predominantly pray for themselves. So, praying primarily seems to be a way of accepting the inevitable, in other words, it mostly functions as a coping mechanism.

Coping processes can be seen as a form of information processing, in which the individual is engaged in dynamic interaction with the environment. Lazarus and Folkman (1984), who developed one of the most elaborate theories, differentiated between primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal refers to the question whether a situation or event amounts to a threat to the individual's well-being. Secondary appraisal, on the other hand, relates to the assessment of the resources that a person has for meeting the requirements of the situation or event. These resources are diverse, but religion is one of them (Pieper & van Uden, 2005). The actual coping process, which takes place after the cognitive appraisals, can adopt two different modes according to Folkman and Lazarus: problem-solving coping (aimed at solving the problem by modifying the situation or by changing behaviour), and emotion-focused coping (refers to control of the emotional responses to the stressor) (Janssen, et al., 1990; Pargament, 1997; Pieper & van Uden, 2005).

In an unchangeable situation, such as death and illness, common motives for prayer, emotion-focused coping will work more effectively than problem-solving coping. Although a central motive of coping is to solve the problem, in emotion-focused coping the point is also to maintain psychological stability (Pieper & van Uden, 2005). In this respect Pargament refers to the Serenity prayer: *'God grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference'* (Pargament, 1997).

A comparable approach is the coping theory of Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snejder (1982). They made a distinction between primary and secondary control: people can bring the environment 'into line with their wishes' or bring themselves 'into line with environmental forces' (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snejder, 1982). When confronted with the hardship of life, most people today do not pray to reverse events or situations, but to find the strength to accept and endure them. Praying is

often an emotion-focused process, aimed at acquiring secondary control, a change in oneself.

This instrumental role for prayer seems in sharp contrast to its expressive use in, for example, worship. Many consider a functional approach as a devaluation of the versatility of prayer. Yet, this is not true. As explained in chapter 2, Saint Augustine, the famous church father wrote, around the year 400 AD, that the ultimate aim of praying is: *'ut ipsa (mens) construatur, non ut Deus instruatur'*, that is, you should pray to construct your soul, not to instruct God. Kierkegaard (1847/1961) reiterated Augustine's thoughts and expressed them as follows: *'The prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who offers it'* (p. 44-45). This is exactly the effect of secondary control or emotion-focus coping.

So far, praying has proven to be closely related to coping. However, that does not explain why people still pray in a secularised country, such as the Netherlands. Of course, a definitive, comprehensive answer is impossible. But we expect that when the institution of prayer is fading away in secularising societies, and when praying indeed has important psychological functions, people will reconstruct a mode of praying of their own. Prayer styles are highly adaptive because all you need to pray is a moment of rest and, if so desired, the opportunity to close your eyes or to join hands. Every moment of the day is an opportunity to enter the sanctuary of praying. It is not necessary to go to church, to kneel and to reiterate the formulaic prayers of the priest or clergy.

The adaptability of prayer, which finds its best expression in the various types of prayer, makes praying a low-threshold activity which can be easily adapted to contemporary forms of individualised religion or spirituality. That is why people in trouble, even in secularised societies, will always find ways to pray and invent prayers to help them cope with the problems life throws at them.

6.3 Further research

In present research, it was our explicit choice to investigate the praying practices of the Dutch by administering a questionnaire to a nation wide sample. Although our attempts to investigate these prayer practices in an unbiased manner, it emerged that every methodology has its shortcomings. The first problem was the unintentional focus on private praying, which was caused by the use of open-ended questions in the SOCON questionnaire. It seemed inevitable: the respondents were interviewed about all kinds of private matters (family, work, leisure time, helping behaviour, conservatism, mental illness, etc.). Then, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire on personal attitude and behaviour, which ended with questions concerning prayer. The fact that respondents had been pre-focused on private matters for more than an hour caused a bias towards private prayer as opposed to public prayer. So, even though our data revealed almost no aspects of public prayer, that does not mean that it does not exist in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, in a next study it would be worthwhile to try to include public prayers.

Another methodological issue was whether or not three or four types of prayer can be distinguished. Discerning various prayer types had already proved to be a problem in the youth study (Janssen et al., 2000) in which the hypothesised four varieties of prayer could not be distinguished in a factor analysis. Religious and petitionary prayer in particular loaded on one factor. In a second order factor analysis, the psychological prayer correlated substantially to both the religious/petitionary factor and the meditative factor. Janssen et al., concluded that psychological aspects are apparently important in all kinds of prayer. A similar problem occurred in this study. Four types of prayer were distinguished based on the open-ended questions (chapter 3). However, the prayer inventory (chapter 5) only distinguished three varieties, even though it was based on the results of the open-ended

questions. The impulsive or psychological factor could not be separated from the other factors. Nonetheless, it would be premature to conclude that only three varieties of prayer exist. In a closed questionnaire, people easily endorse the questions asked. For example, almost everyone confirm that they sometimes pray in bed, pray in times of difficulty, and experience feelings of inner peace. When it comes to open-ended questions, however, people answer what is most applicable to them, which creates a more sharp distinction between distinguished varieties, and which subsequently allows you to discover new forms of prayer. While most prayers are alike and psychological in nature, small nuances can bring about great differences.

Another limitation of this study is the underrepresentation of Muslims. Approximately 5% of the Dutch population is Muslims. However, in the SOCON sample only 0.5% of the respondents were Muslims. Adequate representations of minorities in national surveys is a common problem. Nonetheless, in a next study, we would recommend to included Muslims because little is known about the praying practices of Islamic people living in the Netherlands.

The disadvantage of large-scale and nationwide studies is the focus on the greatest common denominator. Consequently, the praying features of specific groups or of individuals fade away in the mean, median, and average scores. All idiosyncratic answers are lost during the process of categorising and analysing.

Looking ahead, more research in this field needs to be done. First, it would be fruitful to overcome the previously mentioned limitations. Therefore, future studies should include people from other religions, such as Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists. In addition, it is necessary to elaborate on the various types of praying; is the impulsive prayer a distinguishable prayer type or not? Besides the practice of private praying we should include the practice of public praying, which probably will reveal completely other characteristics.

Secondly, some other issues could be explored furthermore. For instance, it would be useful to inquire the praying process in dept. On the one hand, interviews could be held with either people who are experienced prayers, such as people from a monastic order or with people from various denominations or religions. On the other hand, we could compare written prayers with diaries from people who do not pray, and study the psychological processes of both. Finally, more inquiries should be done with the developed prayer inventory. At present, the inventory is part of a large-scale research named: *'Personality, meaning giving, and spirituality'*. Moreover, the inventory could be a useful instrument for praying behaviour in other secularised societies or in a cross-cultural study. Cross-cultural studies would be, above all, really interesting to compare the Dutch praying behaviour with praying practices of other more or less secularised countries.

Our aim was to investigate the praying practice of the Dutch population in general. This led to the discovery that many people pray outside of an institutional context and that forms of prayer have developed which suit this individualised, non-institutionalised religious behaviour. Our understanding of prayer and its meaning has not relied on anecdotes or on fossilised traditions; instead it relied on the living testimonies of the people who actually pray themselves.

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Summary

This thesis addresses my PhD project that I carried out at the Radboud University in Nijmegen (the Netherlands). The project is a continuation of the ongoing research programme, headed by Jacques Janssen, on praying practices. Previous studies of Janssen et al., demonstrated that despite of a profound secularisation process in the Netherlands, approximately half of the Dutch youth still practise praying (Janssen et al., 1990, 2000).

The aim of present study is twofold, (1) to describe the praying practices of the Dutch, and (2) to investigate why people pray in a secularised society.

First, we started to examine whether this frequently occurring praying practice of youngsters also occur among the Dutch population. We analysed data from a national survey named SOCON (social and cultural developments in the Netherlands, N = 1008). We examined, by administering open-ended questions, how many Dutch people pray, why, how, with which aim, where and when. Findings proved that 60% of the Dutch population prays, whereas only 35% are church member. The data (both qualitative and quantitative) also provided information about the structure and content of praying practices, and subsequent analyses resulted in four distinguished types of prayer: the religious, petitionary, meditative, and the impulsive prayer. The first two types are related to institutionalised religiosity (i.e. church attendance and church membership) and the latter two prayers are more individualised or spiritual prayers, and not related to church attendance or membership.

Then, we focused on one particular group of people; those who practise praying without attending church services (referred to as unchurched prayers). We compared these unchurched prayers with: (1) people who attend church and pray (churchgoing prayers), and (2) people who neither go to church nor pray (non-religious group). Starting point was Batson's et al. research (1993) which showed that religion

influences the level of mental health, helping behaviour, and prejudice. The question was whether the unchurched prayers bear more resemblance with the churchgoing prayers or with the non-religious group. Furthermore, we tested the hypothesis that religious socialisation accounts for the found variances between the groups. Results showed that, with regard to traditional religiosity, the unchurched prayers are less traditionally religious than the churchgoing prayers, but significantly more traditionally religious than the non-religious group. As hypothesised, religious socialisation is the most significant explaining factor for the variations found. With regard to contemporary religiosity, no differences were found between the unchurched prayers and churchgoing prayers, both believe to the same extent in contemporary religious aspects, and both significantly more than the non-religious group. Religious socialisation, however, was not an influential factor. Finally, with respect to mental health, prejudice and helping behaviour, and contrary to the results of Batson's study in the US, our findings were ambiguous and no clear pattern emerged. In addition, religious socialisation appeared not to be an influential factor for the differences in these variables.

Hence, we found that religious socialisation could not explain the praying practice of the Dutch, particularly those praying activities not related to church. Other explanations may account for the reason why praying is such a persistent phenomenon in a secularised society. In the last study, we focussed therefore on a psychological function of praying, i.e. religious coping. We examined the relationship between varieties of praying and religious coping styles. A questionnaire was applied to a religious and non-religious group, which comprised the threefold religious coping styles of Pargament, the receptivity coping scale (Alma, Pieper, and Van Uden, 2003), and a self-developed prayer inventory, based on the qualitative findings of the previous open-ended questions. Findings showed that, first, only three varieties of praying emerged: the religious, petitionary and meditative prayer. Secondly, that traditional

types of praying, such as the religious prayer, is related to traditional forms of religious coping, i.e. the collaborative and deferring coping styles of Pargament (1997). In contrast, the meditative prayer, a form of contemporary praying, was only related to the receptivity coping style, which can be characterised as a coping style with an immanent view of God.

Taken together, the findings proved that praying behaviour is a widespread religious activity among the Dutch population, in spite of the decline in church membership and church attendance. Furthermore, four types of praying were distinguished: two more traditional prayer styles, the religious and petitionary prayer, and two more individualised or non-institutionalised styles, the meditative and impulsive prayer. As regards the reasons why praying behaviour may survive in a secularised society, we found first, that religious socialisation plays an important role in transmitting traditionally religious behaviour, whereas it plays no role with respect to contemporary religious behaviour. Subsequently, it emerged that praying is related to religious coping. In addition, various types of praying are related to various coping styles. Hence, we conclude that praying may have a psychological function to people, particularly when confronted with existential problems of life. In that case, people develop a way to prayer, not related to a religious institution, but a way that fits their individualised needs.

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

Deze dissertatie handelt over mijn promotie project dat ik uitgevoerd heb op de Radboud universiteit te Nijmegen (Nederland). Dit project sluit aan op het lopende onderzoek naar het bidedrag van jongeren, onder leiding van Jacques Janssen. Uit voorgaand onderzoek van Janssen et al. bleek dat ondanks de sterke secularisatie in Nederland, ongeveer de helft van de Nederlandse jongeren wel eens bidt.

Het doel van deze studie is tweeledig: (1) het beschrijven van het bidedrag van de Nederlandse bevolking, en (2) het onderzoeken waarom mensen in een geseculariseerde maatschappij bidden.

Op de eerste plaats hebben we onderzocht of het vaak voorkomende bidedrag van jongeren gegeneraliseerd kan worden naar de Nederlandse populatie. Daartoe hebben we de gegevens van een nationale steekproef (SOCON Sociaal en culturele ontwikkeling in Nederland, N=1008) geanalyseerd. Door middel van open vragen hebben we onderzocht hoeveel Nederlanders bidden, waarom, hoe, met welk doel, waar en wanneer. Uit de analyses bleek dat 60% van de Nederlandse bevolking bidt, terwijl maar 35% kerkelijk is. Bovendien leverden zowel kwalitatieve als kwantitatieve resultaten inzicht op over de structuur en inhoud van bidden, en konden vier verschillende varianten van bidden worden onderscheiden: het religieus gebed, vraag gebed, meditatieve gebed en het impulsieve gebed. De eerste twee typen zijn gerelateerd aan geïnstitutionaliseerde religie (bv kerkbezoek en kerklidmaatschap). De laatste twee varianten zijn meer geïndividualiseerde of spirituele vormen van bidden, en zijn geheel niet gerelateerd aan kerkbezoek of lidmaatschap.

Vervolgens hebben we ons onderzoek gericht op de relatief grote groep mensen die niet de kerk bezoeken maar wel bidden. Deze 'niet-kerkelijke bidders' vergeleken we enerzijds met de 'kerkgaande bidders' en anderzijds met de mensen die noch bidden noch de kerk bezoeken (gemakshalve de 'niet-religieuzen' genoemd). Uitgangspunt was het

onderzoek van Batson et al., (1993), die aantoonde dat religie invloed heeft op de mate van geestelijke gezondheid, vooroordelen en helpgedrag. De vraag is of de 'niet-kerkelijke bidders' meer lijken op de 'kerkgaande bidders' of meer op de 'niet-religieuzen'. Bovendien testten we de hypothese dat de verschillen tussen deze groepen afhangen van de mate van religieuze socialisatie. Uit de resultaten bleek dat: wat betreft de traditionele vormen van religiositeit, de 'niet-kerkelijke bidders' minder traditioneel gelovig zijn dan de 'kerkgaande bidders', maar meer dan de 'niet religieuzen'. Religieuze socialisatie was inderdaad de belangrijkste verklarende factor voor de gevonden verschillen. Wat betreft de hedendaagse, meer geïndividualiseerde vormen van religiositeit, bleek dat de 'niet-kerkelijke bidders' niet verschillen van de 'kerkgaande bidders'. Beide groepen geloven in dezelfde mate in deze hedendaagse vormen van religie, en beide significant meer dan de 'niet religieuzen'. Echter religieuze socialisatie had geen verklarende invloed. Wat betreft de invloed op geestelijke gezondheid, vooroordelen en helpgedrag, bleken de resultaten, in tegenstelling tot Batson's resultaten, erg ambigue te zijn en geen zinvol patroon op te leveren. Ook speelde religieuze socialisatie hier geen rol van betekenis.

Tot dus ver hebben we gevonden dat religieuze socialisatie het bidgedrag van de Nederlandse bevolking niet volledig kan verklaren, met name het buitenkerkelijke bidgedrag. Andere oorzaken moeten dan wel bijdragen aan de verklaring waarom bidden zo'n persistent gedrag is. Een van de mogelijkheden is dat bidden een psychologische functie vervult, bijvoorbeeld religieuze coping. In de laatste studie onderzochten we de relatie tussen verschillen varianten van bidden met verschillende vormen van religieuze coping. Daartoe hebben we een vragenlijst voorgelegd aan een groep van religieuze en niet religieuze mensen. Deze vragenlijst bevat de drie religieuze copingstijlen van Pargament (1997), de receptiviteit copingschaal van Alma, Pieper en van Uden (2003), en een zelf geconstrueerde bidden-vragenlijst. Uit de resultaten bleek dat

klassieke bidvarianten samenhangen met traditionele vormen van religieuze coping, zoals de 'collaborative' en 'deferring' stijlen van Pargament (1997), terwijl de modernere varianten van bidden meer samenhangen met een religieuze copingstijl die gebruik maakt van een onpersoonlijk godsbeeld of zonder godsbeeld (receptiviteitschaal).

Samenvattend kunnen we stellen dat uit de resultaten blijkt dat bidden een veelvoorkomende activiteit is onder de Nederlandse bevolking, ondanks de continue daling van kerkbezoek en kerklidmaatschap. Verder zijn er vier varianten van bidden te onderscheiden; twee die typisch traditioneel religieus zijn, namelijk het religieuze gebed en het vraaggebed. En twee vormen die we geïndividualiseerd of niet-geïnstitutionaliseerd kunnen noemen: het meditatieve gebed en het impulsieve gebed. Wat betreft de redenen waarom mensen in een geseculariseerde samenleving nog steeds bidden, konden we vaststellen dat religieuze socialisatie een belangrijke rol speelt bij traditionele vormen van religie, terwijl het geen enkele rol van betekenis heeft bij de geïndividualiseerde vormen van religie of spiritualiteit. Vervolgens blijkt dat bidden samenhangt met religieuze coping. Daarom concluderen we dat bidden een psychologische functie kan vervullen, in het bijzonder als mensen geconfronteerd worden met existentiële problemen van het leven. Dan zullen mensen vormen van bidden ontwikkelen die geheel los staan van de geïnstitutionaliseerde religie, maar wel aansluiten bij de hedendaagse behoeften van de mens.

Nawoord (epilogue in Dutch)

Is alles over bidden nu gezegd? Ik dacht van niet. Ik moet denken aan een lezing van Ton Lathouwers, emeritus hoogleraar Russische literatuur en zenleraar, die vaak in zijn lezingen de religieuze dimensie beschrijft van het dagelijks leven, een dimensie die voorbij gaat aan de traditionele religies.

“Gebeden zijn iets van alle tijden. Het bestaat in alle tradities, vaak traditionele teksten, die we opzeggen of die we zingen. Zoals de priester uit de film ‘Kreten en gefluister’ van Ingmar Bergman, die traditiegetrouw zijn gebedenboek pakt en daar zonder enige passie uit voorleest. Maar dan op het einde van de film als hij ontredderd knielt en schreeuwt, om daar, waar hij niets van begrijpt, de afgrond van het onbekende en het zwijgen van de hemel, om daar zijn kreten en gefluister te laten horen, met zijn eigen woorden uit het hart. En bovenal als een vraag, het gebed als een vraag! Het is de noodkreet, die recht uit het hart komt. Maar een noodkreet waar ook geen antwoord op komt.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, schrijver van ‘De kleine prins’, schrijft hoe hij plotseling ontdekte dat de grote kracht van het gebed is dat je géén antwoord krijgt, dat het géén ruilhandel is, niet een stemmetje dat terug komt. Ook Dostoevski zegt in ‘De gebroeders Karamazov’: ‘de hemel zwijgt, je hebt alleen het woord van je hart’.

Dan ben je alleen. Wat je dan nog kunt doen, is in geen enkel boek te lezen. Het is het loslaten van alle beelden en plaatjes, van alle bekende dingen over bidden. Het is niet het herhalen van woorden, van vaste formules, van het terugvallen op vertrouwde religieuze begrippen. En juist daar kan iets gebeuren, daar kan iets oplichten, daar kan iets opengaan. En dat laat de film van Ingmar Bergman zien. Wat dan van bidden overblijft is alleen het ‘niet weten’, het is ten diepste de Onmogelijke Vraag, de Onmogelijke Vraag van het leven zelf.” (Lathouwers, 2006)

Ik heb met deze dissertatie een tipje van de sluier opgelicht, maar dat het leven, inclusief bidden, ten diepste een Onmogelijke Vraag is, vind ik wel mooi einde van dit boek.

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Curriculum Vitae

Sarah Bänziger werd op 13 augustus 1965 geboren te Swalmen. Tot 1985 heeft ze op het Bisschoppelijk college te Sittard Havo en Atheneum gevolgd. Daarna heeft ze enkele jaren in Praag gewoond. In 1998 begon zij de studie psychologie aan de KUN in Nijmegen, en vanaf 1999 koos ze voor de hoofdrichting Cultuur- en Godsdienst psychologie. In 2001 behaalde zij haar doctoraal diploma. Meteen daarna begon ze aan het AIO project: 'Praying as a universalising variable', waaraan ze tot juni 2006 heeft gewerkt. Naast dit promotie onderzoek heeft ze in de afgelopen jaren onderwijs gegeven en actief geparticipeerd in verschillende verenigingen en organisaties.